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CHRISTIANITY AS LIFE

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CHRISTIANITY AS TRUTH

THE NATURE OF CHRISTIANITY. Vol. II.

CHRISTIANITY AS TRUTH

BY
EDWARD GRUBB, M.A.

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“ If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

JOHN viii. 31, 32

PREFACE

IN the previous volume, *Christianity as Life*, it was said that "while Christianity is in essence a new life brought to men by Jesus Christ, there was from the first wrapped up in it a new outlook on the universe," and that the question must be faced whether this new outlook would bear examination in the light of history and of known facts. That is the question with which the present volume attempts in some measure to deal. I am deeply conscious of inability to treat it as it ought to be treated. Those readers who need a better thought-out basis than the present book supplies may be referred to Dr. W. R. Matthews's *Studies in Christian Philosophy*, which is admirably clear.

I may however refer here to two leading thoughts which underlie the following chapters. The first is that the word "God" is taken to stand for a Reality that is partly revealed to us and is partly beyond revelation; and that in this is a possible clue to the difficulty felt by many in regard to His "Personality." It is the Personal element in God to which we have access in religious experience, and above all in the revelation brought by Christ. To the God of Nature a term like "super-personal" may be better suited, though to this we can attach no clear meaning. Both ideas of God are required, and both represent the one Reality. The Personal idea is that which concerns us most, because it represents the side of the Divine with which we can come into direct relation; the further side being reached only indirectly, through inference. Closely connected with this differentiation in the idea of God is that which Christianity is obliged to make—between God as Eternal (or timeless) and as entering in Christ the Time-series of events. Perhaps the conception

of the self-limitation of the Divine, to which Pauline thought leads up, covers both difficulties. Self-limitation, or Love, may lie behind the aspect of God in which He makes Himself known to us as Personal, responding to us in Prayer, and in which He acts in particular events in history.

The second conception that has helped to inform these chapters is that of "Emergence," which has been made familiar in the series of Gifford Lectures delivered by Professors S. Alexander and Lloyd Morgan. It is very illuminating (to my own mind at least) to think of Christ and Christianity as an *emergent* order of human existence—related to ordinary human life somewhat as physical life is related to inorganic matter, and conscious life to that which is merely organic. If in all cases the emergence appears to be gradual, it yet involves (to use Professor Lloyd Morgan's term) greater "richness in reality" as successive stages are reached. Use is made of this thought especially in Chapter IX, where I have attempted to meet some of the objections to which it may lie open.

Since writing these chapters I have read Professor Julian Huxley's book, *Religion Without Revelation*. Much of his argument appears to run counter to my own; but this I believe is on the surface more than in reality, and I do not feel it necessary to alter what I have written. His idea of "revelation" seems inadequate, not to say crude; and his interpretation of man's higher religious experiences, as independent of personality in God, is not to me convincing.

My thanks are again due to my friend William E. Wilson, B.D., of Woodbrooke, for reading the proof and giving me the benefit of some criticisms, and also to Mr. A. W. Rymer Roberts, of the Mottens Institute for Parasitology, Cambridge, for comments and suggestions on some chapters which touch on Evolution.

EDWARD GRUBB

LEITCHWORTH,
April 1928

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CHRISTIANITY AS TRUTH

SUMMARY

THE early experience of Christianity as Life was essentially Hebraic, and was closely associated with the life and character of Jesus. Its spread from Judea into the Gentile world subjected it to a process of Hellenization, whereby it tended to become more and more a system of ideas—guaranteed as “true,” in contrast with the purely speculative notions of Gnosticism. What preserved it from becoming a mere philosophy was the recognition, however inadequate, of its historical basis. But even this, as in the assertion of the Divine Sonship of Christ, raised speculative questions to which valid answers had to be sought. Christianity involved a new outlook on the world. Intellectual answers, to questions historical and speculative, form the fabric of Christian Belief, as distinguished from Christian Faith, which is the response of our whole personality to Christianity as Life. The discovery and formulation of the truths involved in Christianity is the work of Christian Theology. Such “rationalizing” of Christian data is unavoidable; but all theology is necessarily imperfect and tentative.

CHAPTER I

THE RELATION OF DOCTRINE TO LIFE

IN the preceding volume an attempt was made to exhibit the nature of Christianity as essentially Life. The use of this term was, of course, metaphorical. Physical life is known by experience as having the power to absorb, transform, and vitalize inorganic matter, giving it new properties and capacities, raising it to a new order of coherence and activity. So Christianity, it appeared, was able—especially through the new experience of God which it opened up for men—to transform human character, and raise the lives of men to a new level of blessedness and social coherence maintained by active love. Mankind was started on a new path, significantly described by the early Apostles as “the Way.”

Such a conception of religion is, I believe, essentially Hebraic. The Hebrew mind was, above all things, practical and ethical, and Christianity started as a new movement within the Jewish fold. Its Founder and all its first Apostles were Jews, and its roots were deeply struck in the soil of Jewish faith. In the Old Testament, and especially in the Psalms and Proverbs, righteousness is “life,” as contrasted with wickedness which is “death.” “The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.”¹ “Thou wilt show me the path of life; in Thy presence is fullness of joy.”² The use of the term passed over into New Testament speech. Even in the Synoptic Gospels the Kingdom of God, at least in its inner aspect, is identified with “eternal life”;³ and in the fourth Gospel the wider and universal term has almost wholly supplanted the

¹ Prov. xiv. 27.

² Psal. xvi. 11.

³ Mark x. 17, 23; cf. ix. 43, 45.

narrower Jewish one. "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly."¹

The power to live "abundantly"—in this world and not only in the world to come—was undoubtedly one of the most striking features of early Christian experience. Men and women found their lives raised to a new level of insight, power, and efficiency: their hold on reality strengthened, their intelligence quickened, their power of love indefinitely increased; even their bodily powers sharing in the "salvation" (*salus* or *Heil*) which they had experienced. "Everything goes to prove that the 'more abundant life,' offered by the Johannine Christ to his followers, was literally experienced by them; and was the source of their joy, their enthusiasm, their mutual love and power of endurance."² And all this was closely associated with their knowledge of the kind of life their Master himself had lived: the Synoptic Gospels, founded probably on oral instruction given by those who had been companions of Jesus, show the place that this must have taken in early Christian thought. "The alleged facts of the life of Jesus of Nazareth were systematically taught to catechumens, and systematically impressed on the faithful in the religious meetings; and great stress was laid on the duty of imitating him, or (as St. John sums it up for us) 'walking as he walked.' It was fully understood to be the one necessary and sufficient duty of Christian men."³

THE HELLENIZATION OF CHRISTIANITY

When Christianity in the middle of the first century expanded beyond the fold of Judaism into the wider environment of Greek life, it began at once to undergo a process of

¹ John x. 10.

² Evelyn Underhill, *The Life of the Spirit*, pp. 44 ff.

³ Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, Vol. II., p. 71.

"Hellenization," and in its Hellenized form it has come down to us.¹ Hence the difficulty we find in reading the New Testament through the eyes of those who wrote it. Our tendency is to interpret it in the light of later ideas; and there is need not only of Christian experience but of study, and the exercise of historical imagination, if we are to recover the Hebraic outlook of the early days.

The Greek mind was strongly developed, as the Hebrew mind was not, on the analytic or critical side, as Paul well knew when he encountered the dilettante philosophers of Athens. He wrote to the Corinthians, "The Greeks seek after wisdom": any new teaching, able to find lodgment in their minds, must be capable of reasoned presentation, and must be patient of intellectual scrutiny. Plato's Socrates told his judges that he found "an unexamined life was not worth living."² He believed himself called by God to the unpopular and thankless task of driving men, by searching questions, to criticize and think out their conventional ideas about politics, justice, and the good life. Like other prophets of humanity, he was before his time; but the seeds of his teaching fell upon congenial soil, and after his death they took root and grew. When Christianity reached the Greek world, being full of affirmations concerning God and Christ, the meaning and purpose of life and its eternal destiny, these affirmations had to defend themselves against the criticism of the Greek intellect. In some respects, moreover, its ethical values were very different from those appreciated by any of the Greek schools of philosophy: especially its

¹ Professor Harnack draws attention to the fact that Christianity never took root on Semitic soil, with the partial exception of Syria. "There must," he says, "be some element in this religion which is allied to the greater freedom of the Greek spirit. In one sense Christianity has really remained Greek down to the present day. The forms it acquired on Greek soil have been modified, but they have never been laid aside within the Church at large, not even within Protestantism itself." (*The Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. I., p. 74.)

² F. J. Church, *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, p. 72.

exaltation of humility, its apparent contempt for politics and war, and the scant place it seemed to give to art and literature and music as means of human perfection. The preaching of the Cross was to the Greeks foolishness, as to Jews it had been a stumbling-block. When the new religion did find entrance into Greek minds it was for the most part, in early days at least, not so much by force of argument as by the testimony of life. In spite of their love of philosophy, which many of the Christians did not understand, the Greeks were compelled to acknowledge that the followers of Jesus possessed a power to live well which even the philosophers could scarcely command. It is largely to this fact that appeal is made by the Apologists of the second century, such as Justin Martyr, Aristides, and the unknown author of the Epistle to Diognetus. "What the soul is in a body," is the bold claim of the last-mentioned, "this the Christians are in the world."¹

Yet these same writers also maintained that Christianity had a better answer than the current philosophies could give to the problems of the world. Christ was for them not only "the power of God" but "the wisdom of God." By Aristides this claim is put in the forefront of his defence. Before another century had elapsed Greek minds, at Alexandria especially, had thought out a philosophy of Christianity which could at least compete on equal terms with other systems of thought. In the works of Clement, and still more of Origen, we see Greek Christianity at its best.

Meanwhile the dangers of unbridled speculation on Christian data, particularly in the atmosphere of oriental mysticism which had spread over Asia Minor, were showing themselves in the great Gnostic "heresy," with which, during the latter half of the second century, the Christian Church was at close grips. The water of life was being evaporated in clouds of speculation, and it seemed doubtful

¹ Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 506.

whether the Gospel would not disappear altogether in a dreamland of theosophical metaphysic. So far as Gnosticism was Christian, it made of Christianity in the main *a system of ideas*, which only the few could understand. The danger was countered by Irenæus and others, but at the cost of partially surrendering the primitive Hebraic conception of Christianity as essentially life. It was (virtually and perhaps subconsciously) agreed that Christianity *was* a system of ideas, but one that could be guaranteed as *true*, according to the "rule of faith" handed down by Christ through his Apostles, and now possessed by the duly consecrated bishops. The great Christological controversies that rent the Church from the third to the fifth centuries show that the dogmatic conception of Christianity was by that time dominant—that the religion of Jesus had been effectually Hellenized. The climax is reached in the so called Athanasian Creed, with its "Let him who would be saved *think* thus of the Trinity."¹ What saved Christianity from becoming a purely speculative system like that of Gnosticism was the preservation of its historical basis in the life and

¹ It would seem that the process of transforming Christianity from a life to a doctrine—or, at any rate, of placing the main emphasis on the latter—had begun quite early, perhaps towards the end of the first century. In some of the latest books of the New Testament it is clearly apparent. "Faith," which for Paul had almost always meant a new attitude of the soul to God, whose grace had reached men in Christ, is already tending to become a deposit of sound teaching, "*the faith*." In the Pastoral Epistles, while the ethical demands of the Christian life are emphasized, great prominence is given to the necessity of maintaining correct doctrine (1 Tim. i. 3, 19, iv. 1, vi. 3; 2 Tim. i. 13, iv. 3; Titus i. 9, 13, ii. 1, etc.). In the epistle attributed to Jude the readers are exhorted "to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). The change of emphasis is much less marked in the Johannine Gospel and Epistle, which are also thought to date from about the end of the first century. In these writings right "believing" is at bottom not intellectual but ethical. It has recently been shown that the idea of a rationalized orthodoxy as necessary for religion is essentially Greek, and may be traced in the last resort to Plato, especially to the tenth book of his *Laws* (J. Baillie, article on "The Idea of Orthodoxy" in *Hibbert Journal*, Jan. 1926, pp. 240 ff. See also Dean Inge, in *The Legacy of Greece*, p. 26).

teaching of Jesus. "History," wrote the late Baron von Hügel, "is essentially necessary to religion, if only as a corrective, probably the sole efficient corrective, against the delusions of a false mysticism."¹ But in the absence of any adequate historical sense, or critical method of judging facts of history, the mind and character of the Founder of Christianity, with the lapse of time, became more and more obscured. A summary of the outstanding traditional facts concerning his life and death and resurrection was preserved in the Baptismal Confession which gradually took shape in the so called Apostles' Creed, and doubtless the Gospel story was kept alive in the minds of the faithful by Christian preaching. But the great controversies as to his Person were carried on with but the scantiest recognition of the historical and personal data out of which had emerged belief in his Divine humanity, and in the light of which alone any satisfying theory could be formed.²

THE CHRISTIAN WORLD-OUTLOOK

The process of the Hellenizing of Christianity was, doubtless, under the conditions of its origin and expansion, very largely inevitable. The thought-principles that underlay the new life had to be ascertained and formulated. Latent in Christianity there was *a new world-outlook*, a fresh vision of the ultimate Realities of God, man, and nature, which the Greek intellect was bound to bring to light and try to express. Evelyn Underhill rightly says that "any vividly lived spiritual life must, as soon as it passes beyond the level of mere feeling and involves reflection, involve too some more

¹ *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion*, second series, P. 53.

² Even a devout Roman Catholic can admit that "the intellectualist view of religion, and of the ultimate nature and worth of man, has prevailed to such an extent as, in good part, to obliterate the essential characteristics of human nature, and hence of human nature's worth, in our Lord's life and character themselves" (von Hügel, *op. cit.*, p. 22).

or less articulated conception of the spiritual universe, in harmony with which that life is to be lived.”¹ And the truth of such affirmations concerning the spiritual universe could only, as has already been said, be maintained against criticism by the use of reason. The new life which Christian preachers offered to men was bound up with the assertion that Jesus was the Son of God. In what sense was this credible? What was the nature of God, that He should have a “Son?” Was it enough to think of Him as the personal Creator and Lawgiver whom the Jews worshipped, or was He rather the infinite and ineffable Source of all being, far removed from the finite world, and only able to communicate with it through a series of “emanations” from Himself, of which (as the Christian Gnostics contended) Jesus Christ was the last and highest? If Jesus (as the orthodox maintained) was a real man of flesh and blood, how was he also the Divine Son? What was the nature of the Redemption which he offered to men? Was it simply a new power to live the moral life, a better conformity of the will of man to the will of God, or did it mean the actual deification of man’s nature by the supernatural infusion of an immortal “substance,” the very nature of God Himself? Such questions the Greek intellect could not leave alone; it must inevitably struggle with them and try to find satisfying answers. Christianity must be able to defend itself as *true*, and not only as *good* for the purposes of the highest life.

THE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS TRUTH

Pilate’s great question, “What is Truth?” here confronts us, and to it we must devote a little thought, that we may

¹ E. Underhill, *op. cit.*, p. 18. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews recognized this when he wrote, “He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him” (Heb. xi. 6). The kind of world-outlook that is involved in Christian faith is touched on by Professor John Baillie in the article referred to above, which may be warmly commended.

reach a provisional answer; and this will involve some consideration of the human powers by which Truth is apprehended. Provisionally, then, we may describe Truth, in the broadest meaning of the word, as *that which wins assent* from the normally constituted mind—assuming for the moment that healthy existing minds are progressing towards normality, and that none has yet fully reached it. Truth thus described falls into three main departments, corresponding with the cognitive, æsthetic, and ethical activities respectively of the human mind. Our minds are learning to distinguish truth of fact from error, true beauty from ugliness, true moral goodness from that which is specious and false. “Truth” wins our assent, its opposite is rejected. In all these departments of experience there is *a true standard of value*, which we may learn to appreciate and apply, and so to judge rightly concerning the objects of thought which require valuation. The “normal” mind (in the sense in which the word is here used) gives its assent to that which is really “true.”

In a narrower sense “Truth” is often confined to the first of these departments only, that which is concerned with fact or real existence. A proposition is regarded as “true” if it correctly represents reality so far as this is known.¹ But how do we judge the “correctness” of the representation? There are two main tests: the first is the *coherence* of the proposition with the rest of our knowledge: that is “true” which settles down into an orderly system of thought or belief. The other is that it wins assent from *other minds* as normal as our own. It is certainly the case that a proposition may fail at the moment to pass either of these tests and yet after all be true. I may be thoroughly convinced of its truth

¹ We cannot define Truth as “the correspondence of ideas with reality” because the two things cannot be compared. We do not know reality in itself and apart from ideas; we only know it in relation to mind or consciousness. Even in the perception of a real object the mind is full of ideas by which the experience is interpreted.

though I cannot as yet reconcile it with my other knowledge, and though other people do not at present assent to it as true. In this case I can only hold it in the spirit of "faith," waiting to see whether or not it is fitted to take its place in the fabric of recognized Truth, and giving it my own assent until I am compelled to think otherwise.

Where in this scheme does "religious" truth come in? Propositions concerning the Object of religious worship, which are what chiefly concern us here, differ in important ways from those that have to do with knowledge of the world about us. God is undiscoverable by any exertion or extension of our powers of "sight"—that is, by the sense experience through which we gain knowledge of the material universe. His reality is also, as we shall later on have occasion to suggest, not subject to cogent demonstration like a proposition in Geometry. But this is not to say that He is unknowable.¹ There is at least one other very important department of experience in which we have knowledge, the truth of which we should never dream of questioning, but which is not derived either directly from the senses or indirectly from argument: that is, the real existence of *other minds than our own*. Such minds are not objects of contemplation to us, as are our own and other human bodies; and we could not infer their existence and quality from the acts and words and looks of other bodies unless there were within us an instinct or intuition assuring us of their reality.² We must

¹ The reasons why religious truth is not obtrusive or coercive, as are truths of observation and demonstration, are well shown by Henry Churchill King in *The Seeming Unreality of the Spiritual Life*, passim. This book should be read by any who are inclined to think that religious beliefs are discredited at the outset by the very fact that their truth can be doubted. (See further, p. 186.)

² See W. E. Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, ch. xvii. Also S. Alexander, *Space, Time and Deity*, Vol. II., p. 37: "We do not contemplate our own mind as if it were an external object, much less the mind of another. . . . But that a mind is there, is assurance. It is not invented by inference or analogy, but is an act of faith forced on us by a peculiar sort of experience."

therefore be prepared to recognize that we may have real knowledge of matters that we cannot "prove" by the use of either senses or intellect.

Further, religious truth differs from mere truth of fact in carrying with it a far deeper and richer content of æsthetic and ethical value. The bare "existence" of God is not enough to satisfy the demands of the religious life; He must be a *qualified* Reality, possessed of a quality that satisfies our longing for perfect beauty and perfect goodness. Our knowledge of Him, if we can have it, must be akin to our knowledge of the mind of another person whose character we can unreservedly admire and reverence. But the values we attach to qualities are also themselves outside the range of logical demonstration. The beauty of a picture or landscape, the nobility of a human soul, cannot be proved by argument; they must be perceived and appreciated by direct insight. We need, of course, to be assured in some way that the word "God" really connotes the qualities we can love, and this assurance Christianity professes to give us since it claims to be a "revelation"; but our appreciation of these qualities must be wholly our own.¹

FAITH AND BELIEF

To express the power by which we apprehend God and religious Truth Christianity has evolved the term "faith." It is fortunate that the English language enables us to distinguish it from "belief"; in German the same word *Glaube* has to serve for both. Yet we do not always use our advantages: Faith is constantly being confused with Belief, as it is (for instance) in the Athanasian Creed. It is hardly a paradox to say that Christians do not need uniting on matters of Faith, for in these they are already one. Where

¹ The meaning of "revelation" will be considered later (ch. ii., p. 58, and ch. iii., pp. 85 ff.).

they differ is in Belief, which is a very different thing.¹ It is an intellectual attitude, concerned in the main with matters of fact: I "believe" that which I recognize as *true* in the narrower sense of the term. "Faith" has a richer content of meaning; by derivation it implies a relation between *persons*—a relation of loyalty on one side ("good faith") and of trust on the other. We speak of Belief in facts, but of Faith in a person. Faith may be regarded as the organ of religious experience, as the eye is the organ of sight. Only, it is not a *separate* organ; it is rather the response of our whole personality to the highest and best that has been revealed to us; and, so far as it is true faith, it carries with it unquestioning certitude. It lies deeper in us than feeling or thought or will, though its use involves them all; it appears to be an act of our deepest primary self.² Christian faith is our response to whatever inward revelation has come to us through Jesus Christ—a revelation which, so long as we are in the attitude of faith, we do not and cannot question. A Christian may be defined as one whose inward eyes are opened to perceive the beauty of his character, and whose life is being moulded by what he has seen there.³ Thus faith is the human side of what we have called "Christianity as Life"—our unhesitating

¹ A recent experience of the Society of Friends in Great Britain may be of interest in this connection. A few years ago it became necessary to prepare a new edition of its statements concerning Christian Doctrine. This was feared by many of the members, because of deep differences of opinion on such matters as the inspiration and authority of the Bible. The suggestion was made that the book should begin with a series of statements not of "doctrine" but of "life"—that is, testimonies to Christianity in the actual words of saintly Quakers from Fox downwards, recounting some of their religious experience. Such a collection was prepared, and brief statements of "doctrine," drawn from documents issued by the Yearly Meeting at various times, were added to it, with the intimation that these should be taken, not as final, but as expressions of the collective belief of the Society at the time they were issued. The volume was passed by the Yearly Meeting with hardly a dissentient voice, and did much to unite those who thought themselves divided. (*Christian Life, Faith and Thought*, 1922.)

² Inge, *Faith and its Psychology*, pp. 53, etc.

³ See further, ch. ii., p. 58.

response to what is primary and essential and vital in our religion.

Christian Belief, on the other hand, is our intellectual response to "Christianity as Truth." It is less comprehensive than Faith, for its seat is in one department of our complex psychical activity. It takes shape in our affirmations of what we regard as the truths of our religion. These "truths" are of two kinds, Historical and Speculative. Christianity as Truth involves, on the one hand, assertions as to matters of fact concerning the man Jesus of Nazareth, his birth, life, death, and resurrection, his relation to the religious ideas and practices of his day, and so forth; and, on the other, statements concerning what we have called the Christian world-outlook—the nature of God and Christ, of redemption, immortality and the like.

Further, belief in the truth of both historical and speculative statements is of two kinds. We may accept them either because we believe their truth is vouched for by a competent and trustworthy authority,¹ or because we have tested them for ourselves and are convinced by the evidence that they are true. In the latter case, especially, our belief in different propositions may vary in strength according to the degree of cogency of the available evidence: we may be absolutely convinced that Jesus really lived and was crucified, and that his followers believed they saw him alive after death; while hesitating to accept the common beliefs that he was really born of a Virgin, that what his followers saw after his death was a physical body like our own, that he actually said everything reported of him in the Gospels, and so forth.

This may be called "active" belief, as involving the vigorous use of the intellect. The acceptance of statements on authority, on the other hand, can be described as relatively

¹ The attitude of unreasoning submission to the Church's authority is called by Roman Catholics "faith"; but I find no warrant whatever in the New Testament for using the word in that sense. The contrast there drawn is between faith and "sight," not between faith and reason.

"passive," but it may nevertheless be perfectly reasonable. It is only a few who are competent to find and weigh evidence for themselves; most of us must inevitably take the larger part of our beliefs on trust. But even in this case an intellectual element is involved in our submission to a particular authority: we cannot intelligently accept statements on the authority of Church or Scripture or tradition unless we are convinced that the authority is worthy of our trust. The fact that many people profess beliefs without intellectual effort of any kind simply means that in them reason is asleep; they are content to express the opinions of others, having no intelligent belief of their own.¹ This applies equally to historical and to speculative statements of belief.

It is, of course, only for purposes of thought that we can thus distinguish faith from belief. In practice they are inextricably mingled. Faith is compelled to express itself in part by affirmations, and therefore carries with it a large measure of belief. Hartley Coleridge says of faith:

It is an affirmation and an act
That bids eternal truth be present fact—

where he is obviously thinking chiefly of the affirmations the soul makes concerning God and its relations to Him. The two attitudes are perhaps even more difficult to separate in the case of some of our historical beliefs. Take two examples: (1) What are we to say about the Christian's assurance of the character of Jesus Christ? If it is faith, it ought to carry its own irresistible certainty. But it is historically conditioned and, like all affirmations about matters of history, it might apparently be upset by some new discovery of fact.² Is it therefore rightly to be set down as nothing

¹ The positiveness with which a belief is expressed is no evidence of its real strength or of the conviction that lies behind it. Indeed, its dogmatic vehemence is often in inverse ratio to the speaker's knowledge of the subject-matter.

² As, for example, that Jesus was really such a person as is portrayed in some of the Apocryphal Gospels.

more than an intellectual belief? I think not; for, in all our knowledge of other minds, as was shown above, there is at work something not derived from either the senses or the intellect—an element of intuition akin to faith. We must, I believe, distinguish between bare *events* in history and personal *characters* that appear on its stage. In the case of the former (for example, the Virgin Birth of Jesus, which does not affect his character) we are, I believe, right in weighing the evidence carefully and if needful suspending judgment. Our right attitude is one of belief. But, in the appreciation of a character, which is not a bare event but carries æsthetic and moral value, the right attitude is that of person to person—it is one of faith. The more intimately we have, by intuition, looked into the character of another, even of a person in history, the more we shall be able to reach certitude; to form a mental picture that new discoveries may perhaps modify but cannot destroy. Still more will this be so if the Character is one with whom, as Christian experience suggests, we can still come into living contact. (2) As regards assurance of the Resurrection of Jesus, this also is much more than belief in a fact of history. What restored the faith of the first disciples of Jesus was not the mere fact that a dead body came to life again—supposing that to have occurred. It was the experience that the same Friend and Teacher whom they had known and loved and trusted was living and making himself known to them; it was a *religious* experience, intensifying their faith in God. And so, in essence, it has remained.

It is here we find the answer to the difficulty suggested long ago by Professor T. H. Green, of Oxford, when the negative criticism of Strauss and Baur was in the ascendant. In his great sermon on Faith he said:

The more strongly we insist that faith is a personal and conscious relation of the man to God, forming the principle of a new life, not perhaps observable by others, but which the man's own

conscience recognizes, the more awkward becomes its dependence on events believed to have happened in the past. . . . It is not on any estimate of evidence, correct or incorrect, that our true holiness can depend. . . . There is thus an inner contradiction in that conception of faith which makes it a state of mind involving peace with God and love towards all men, and at the same time makes its object that historical work of Christ, of which our knowledge depends on evidence of uncertain origin and value.¹

Green would have had faith move in a sphere that could never be troubled by the doubts and probabilities that must necessarily attend belief in historical events; but this is not the Christian faith as it has come down to us. That faith, which is our human apprehension of the Life that Christianity essentially is, does depend on an event in history: it could not persist, as Christian, if it were discovered that Jesus never lived a human life upon this earth. It therefore necessarily carries with it *beliefs*, with all the difficulty that attends their historical criticism. It also necessarily raises the speculative question: What is the nature of God, if (as Christianity asserts) He reveals Himself through particular facts of history? Such difficulties of belief arise out of the very nature of Christianity itself, and we must meet them as best we may.

There is this to add: that faith may legitimately react upon belief, and supply some valid testimony towards its truth. For example, the easy assertion (made to-day, it is fair to say, by no critic possessed of a real sense of history) that the Gospel records are simply inventions of a credulous age²—embroideries that have gathered round a semi-mythical Figure, like the medieval legends about King Arthur and his knights—is incredible to anyone who rightly appreciates the presentation they give us of the mind and character of Jesus. This, especially in the inimitable parables, is brought before us as that of a Person of such power and

¹ T. H. Green, *Works*, Vol. III., p. 260.

² For instance, Karl Kautsky, *Foundations of Christianity*, pp. 28-43.

constructive originality—so far in advance of what the same records suggest to us of the mental qualities of his followers—that the latter may rightly be held to have been incapable of inventing it. A sane valuation of the Character, which is faith, is a help to true belief.

RELIGION AND THEOLOGY

If Faith is the response of our whole being to Christianity as Life, and Belief is the response of our intellect to Christianity as Truth, a similar difference will hold between the expressions of Christianity in Religion and in Theology. The vital core of Christianity is a new experience of God, and based on that, a new way of life in relation to Him. It is essentially Religion at its highest point in human history. But, as we have seen, this experience and way of living raises questions of Truth, some historical and some speculative, with which the intellect is compelled to deal. The discovery and formulation of the truths of our religion is the work of Christian Theology. We cannot escape it, and we ought not to wish to do so. Theology indeed is not Religion, any more than a skeleton is a living body. But an animal body, if it is of any complexity, must secrete a bony skeleton to enable it to survive. The skeleton is essential to the rest of the organism so long as it is vitalized by the latter; if the organism dies the skeleton is useless, except for preservation in a museum. So, if religion dies, theology—the intellectual formulation of the truths implicit in it—is of interest only to the historian. It is no substitute for religion, even if for a time it maintains a ghostly existence like an imagined animated skeleton. Recently I read that “a summary of the Christian religion has been discovered, engraved on stone in ancient Chinese characters, in the centre of China.” This is impossible; for the Christian religion cannot be “summarized,” or even written out at

length—it can only be lived.¹ What can be summarized and preserved for historical reference is the bony skeleton of its theology. When a person, in answer to the question, What is your religion? proceeds to state his creed, it is much as though he were trying to define a man in terms of skull, vertebrae, and ribs.

To use another figure, the relation of theology to religion is like that of the theory of music and musical sounds to one of Beethoven's symphonies. The theory is by no means useless. A composer or player may produce better music if he knows why certain simultaneous sounds produce harmony and others discord, than if he trusts to his ear alone; but no scientific study of musical sounds will ever produce music. Theology is a theory of religion, not religion itself. It arises out of religion because man is a rational being and is driven to seek for truth—to reduce his experience, if he can, to some kind of intellectual order and coherence.

Religion exists and must exist as a life and experience before it can be made the object of reflective thought; but there is no more reason, in this than in other instances, why experimental knowledge should exclude scientific knowledge. . . . To infuse into the spontaneous and unsifted conceptions of religious experience the objective clearness, necessity, and organic unity of thought—this, in religion as elsewhere, is the aim of science, and it is no futile aim. . . . It would be strange indeed if, in the highest of all provinces of human experience, intelligence should be compelled to renounce its birthright, and a check be put on those intellectual instincts which in every other province lead the human mind to reflect, to analyse, to endeavour after the rational grounding, harmonizing, systematizing, of the materials which experience supplies.²

The dogmas of religion are the attempts to formulate in precise terms the truths disclosed in the religious experience of mankind.

¹ "The personality of the religious man is the only real expression of Religion." (Streeter, *Reality*, p. 40.)

² J. Caird, *Fundamental Ideas of Christianity*, Vol. I., pp. 42-45.

In exactly the same way the dogmas of physical science are the attempts to formulate in precise terms the truths disclosed in the sense-perception of mankind.¹

THE "RATIONALIZING" OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Valuable suggestions concerning the relation of theology to religion are to be found in Dr. Rudolf Otto's book *Das Heilige*.² Dr. Otto is widely revered as a devout Christian scholar, and one of the foremost living authorities on the history of religion. In this book he explores the nature of religious experience, of the human faculties by which its Object is apprehended, and of the process by which the mind of man necessarily tries to express its experience in terms of the understanding. In all religious experience, from the lowest to the highest, he believes that there is present the vague consciousness of a real Object, which is known neither to the senses nor to the intellect, but by an inner power of intuition, which he calls "divination," and which the Quakers name the "Inward Light."³ This "non-rational" or mystical awareness of the "numinous" is comparable to the æsthetic appreciation of beauty in an object; only that in the latter case the spatial and other qualities of the object are perceived by the senses. The "numinous" Object makes itself felt by arousing two emotions—apparently contradictory but often experienced together—those of dread and fascination. Man both fears and exults in his experience of the Divine. The experience itself is "beyond words," because there are no intellectual concepts by which it can be defined, just as is the case with our appreciation of beauty in nature or

¹ A. N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, p. 47.

² Published 1917; an excellent translation into English by John W. Harvey, *The Idea of the Holy*, 1923.

³ It has been observed above that a similar intuitive power must be held to be at work in our knowledge of other minds than our own (p. 23).

art or music.¹ Yet man feels himself compelled to attempt to describe it, and this he can only do by metaphor, that is, in terms devised to express concepts formed by the intellect. The language of poetry comes nearer than that of prose to a vehicle for the expression of such experience; hence in its higher reaches it finds vent in hymns. Dr. Rendel Harris somewhere says that "Dogma begins in Doxology"; and the aphorism seems wholly in harmony with Dr. Otto's main contention. To use his own figure, the "non-rational" element in religion is the woof, which man's intellect is always trying to weave into the warp of well-defined concepts. Thus from first to last religion contains a double content—the raw material of the "numinous" experience, worked up into an intellectual fabric expressed in language: a rudimentary or developed theology.

If this is, as on the whole it appears to me to be, a satisfying account of the nature of religion, we can see why religion necessarily tends to develop a theology. The undefinable Object of religious experience is always being "rationalized," or rendered in terms of our intellect—a department of our mental equipment which, if we can follow Bergson, has been developed by a process of adaptation to a different environment: that, namely, of the outward world in which we live. In any case, the intellectual forms in which religion finds expression are always inadequate to the Reality with which they deal; and processes of reasoning by means of intellectual concepts in this region of experience are always liable to imperfection and error. God Himself is conceived as a Person like ourselves but greater; His grace is thought of as a quasi-mechanical force predestining and compelling the wills of men; the consciousness of self-abasement and nothingness in the presence of the "Holy"

¹ "No words are there to be found, for ever,
For the things that truly exist,
Nothing but fruitless gropings after expression."

(*The Sacrament of Common Life*, Anonymous, p. 71.)

is intellectualized into a dogma of total human depravity, and so forth. All this does not mean that theology is useless. It is inevitable and necessary, just because men are compelled to think out and express their experience as best they can; and real progress can be and has been made in reaching conceptions more adequate to the subject-matter of religious experience, closer in coherence with one another, and therefore nearer to the truth.¹

The purpose of this chapter has been to consider the relations between Christianity as Life and Christianity as a Doctrine of Truth. We have reached the conclusion that in essence it is Religion in its highest and purest form—a form in which it cannot be stated but can only be lived; but that like all religion it necessarily tends to express itself in human language, and that this necessity gives rise to Theology; which, though always imperfect, can make real progress towards truth. In the next chapter we shall be studying what the mind of man made of the central Figure of Christianity; we shall pass on to consider in what sense he brought to men a real revelation of God; and then inquire into the nature of his saving work for men. The experience of his life in their souls led men to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit; and this, further, coupled with belief in the Divine Sonship of Jesus, to the thought of God as a Tri-unity. These subjects will therefore demand attention. If we were right

¹ This appears to me to be a sounder method of treating the relation of theology to religion than that adopted by Dr. G. G. Kullman in his chapter on "Doctrine and Life" (*Theology and Life*, S.C.M., 1926). This writer seems to make Christian theology differ essentially from any other on the ground that its subject-matter "moves in the order of revelation and grace." Apparently he is indisposed to recognize any real knowledge of God outside Christianity. It is true indeed that "Doctrine has to go back to life and be healed in healing life": the danger of rationalism in theology is that it is inclined to ignore or explain away the deeper and "non-rational" element in religion. But, after all, there is a difference between an organism and its skeleton, and between faith and belief.

in suggesting that one of the tests of Truth is coherence in an ordered system of thought, we shall have, still further, to deal with the question whether the Christian world-outlook can be seen to cohere with the rest of our knowledge of the universe. This will compel us to consider whether Christianity offers any real solution to the problem of evil; and, if so, how this solution is to be discovered and verified in experience. All this seems to be needed if we are to deal in any measure with Christianity as Truth.

SUMMARY

CHRISTOLOGY arose out of human religious experience: the wonder aroused by the character, words, and deeds of Jesus. The New Testament contains evidence of the development of ideas about Jesus, but no trace of Christological controversy. In the Synoptics and Acts his humanity is assumed, but his Messiahship acknowledged. In these books there is no mention of his "pre-existence." This idea is first indicated in 1 Corinthians and 1 Peter, and that of Incarnation necessarily followed. In Paul's writings the humanity is assumed but not emphasized; a Logos doctrine is clearly adumbrated. In Hebrews and in the fourth Gospel the Logos doctrine is assumed, but the humanity is also strongly pressed. The New Testament leads up to the thought that the Divine character was revealed in the perfect humanity of Jesus.

From the Logos doctrine starts the development of the Creeds, in which the Church endeavoured to steer a middle course between one-sided insistence on the Divine or the human aspect; finally asserting that two "Natures" were united in a single "Person." While both aspects were thus preserved, no light was thrown on the central difficulty of uniting the Infinite with the finite, the Eternal with part of the Time-series.

For us the question must be stated in terms not of metaphysical "natures" but of personality. Indications that human personality contains elements of the infinite and eternal; and that Divine personality as revealed in Christ contains an element of the finite and human. Divine love manifests itself by self-limitation or self-sacrifice: in creation and revelation, culminating in the Incarnation and the Cross. "Revelation" is a religious experience, appealing to the whole man and not to the intellect only.

NOTE on "Natural" and "Supernatural."

CHAPTER II

THE DIVINE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

OUR oldest sources of information concerning the life of Jesus, while they are almost entirely free from speculation about him, yet preserve many traces of the wonder that was aroused by his words and deeds. "They were all amazed," says Mark in the first chapter of his Gospel, "and questioned among themselves, saying, What is this? A new teaching! With authority he commandeth even the unclean spirits and they obey him."¹ And rather later, after the stilling of the storm on the lake, "They feared exceedingly, and said one to another, Who then is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"²

It was out of such wonder—which must have been widely felt, whether or not things happened just as they are recorded—that the earliest Christology arose. The first followers of Jesus were Jews, and had no love of speculation for its own sake. The facts they had witnessed, the words and deeds they had heard and seen, the quality of the teacher and healer, compelled even Jews to question who and what he was. What could he be, who spoke of his "Father" with utter simplicity, and yet with an apparent intimacy that even the greatest of the prophets had never shown; who had even drawn them into his own secret, and had made the word "God" mean to them what it had never meant before? The foundations of Christology were laid, deep and strong, in the experience, both outward and inward, of the disciples of Jesus.

This is, I believe, the explanation of the remarkable fact, too little noticed, that while there are in the New Testament

¹ Mark i. 27.

² Mark iv. 41.

many evidences of the development of ideas about Jesus, there is no sign that among his followers this gave rise to *controversy*. People who had known him intimately as a man among men heard Paul and others using about him language that had been applied to God (for example, "through whom are all things," 1 Cor. viii. 6), and yet they made no protest: they seem to have accepted it as fitting, and to have begun to use it themselves.¹ Jesus had been able to share with them, in some degree, his own experience of "sonship" with God; they had even begun to think of God in terms of Jesus Christ.

THE TEACHING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the Synoptic Gospels the real humanity of Jesus is taken for granted, as too obvious to need pointing out. This is specially true of the Gospel of Mark, whose somewhat naïve disclosures of the human limitations of the Master are frequently toned down by "Matthew" and Luke, especially the former.² It is "Matthew" who is fond of recording that people "worshipped" Jesus. Yet even in Mark's story there are many passages which give the strong impression that occasionally, at any rate, in the words and acts of Jesus something more than ordinary humanity was perceived to be breaking through. We have already noted his report of the amazement of the disciples and others at the things they saw and heard. Jesus here, quite naturally and unobtrusively, assumes that he has the power to declare the forgiveness of sins—and this arouses the resentment of the scribes.³ In a single breath he makes himself one with

¹ Notice, for instance, the first epistle of Peter, especially i. 21, "who through him are believers in God." The letter may have been written at Rome by Silvanus (v. 12), a companion of Paul, but at Peter's initiation and under his supervision. It certainly seems to come from the period of Paul's lifetime, or very shortly after.

² See Vol. I., *Christianity as Life*, ch. i., p. 17.

³ Mark ii. 5-12; compare Luke vii. 48 f.

the "little children" and with Him who sent him.¹ In the very saying in which he declares there are things he does not know, he puts himself, "the Son," between the angels and the Father.² In "Q," the supposed collection of sayings on which "Matthew" and Luke appear to have drawn, Jesus frequently expresses the unique relation, of which he is conscious, to men on one side and to God on the other. He makes himself the final Judge of men—and this in the Sermon on the Mount, which is often thought of as containing his ethics only.³ It is here we find that greatest of all the self-disclosures of the inner mind of Jesus, in which he speaks of "the Son" as having unique knowledge of the Father, and as revealing this to men who are childlike enough to receive it.⁴

There is no indication that such words, if actually used by Jesus, aroused resentment or even questioning among those who first heard them. This can only mean, I think, that they felt such assertions to be all of a piece with the life they saw their Master living before them. It is usual to say that Jesus gave them the impression of "sinlessness," but this word does scant justice to the facts. What the disciples found in him was not the mere absence of the ordinary faults of men, but the presence of a soul that was absolutely on fire with the will of God, and whose whole life was that of one completely dominated by His Spirit.

Jesus [says W. Herrmann] is incomparable in that he first saw what is good in all its glory, its fullness and its power, and that he nevertheless had not to feel ashamed of what he was, compared with what he knew and what he said. In all other cases, the very

¹ Mark ix. 37.

² Mark xiii. 32. The appellation "the Son of God" in i. 1 may be a later addition to the Gospel, being absent in some of the best MSS.

³ Matt. vii. 21-23 = Luke xiii. 25-27.

⁴ Matt. xi. 25-27 = Luke x. 21 f. As to the genuineness of this passage see below, p. 87.

men whose goodness usually raises us give us such a conception of what is good that we measure their own moral shortcomings by it.¹

This assurance of the perfection of the inner life of Jesus was from the first, and has remained, the chief foundation for belief in his Divine Humanity. For us it is more than belief in a fact of history, reached by the weighing of evidence; the evidence that has come down to us is fragmentary and imperfect, insufficient to bear, when weighed by the intellect only, the burden of such an erection. The doctrine of his sinless perfection is now, as it was for the first disciples, the outcome of personal insight into character—which, as was shown in the last chapter, is of the nature of faith rather than of intellectual belief. But all the evidence we have supports it, and there is none to contradict it. The Synoptic evangelists have achieved the feat—a miracle, surely, if they had not a Fact before them—of depicting a Man so perfect in character as to be also perfect in humility.² This is, I believe, the point of the one saying of Jesus which is sometimes appealed to as evidence on the other side, “Why callest thou me good?” It is a confession that he felt himself to be truly a man among men, subject like others to the pull of temptation and to growth in “wisdom”—which must mean in moral as well as in intellectual insight.³ To interpret it as a confession of the consciousness that he had ever yielded to temptation is to make it contradict all the other evidence we have.

In the Acts of the Apostles Christology is as primitive and undeveloped as it is in the Synoptics. Speeches alleged to have been made by Peter and other Apostles are reported in the early part of the book, and others by Paul in the later

¹ *The Communion of the Christian with God*, E.T., p. 91.

² Contrast Tennyson's Arthur, especially in the poem *Guinevere*.

³ So Streeter, *Reality*, pp. 190 f. The first Gospel, according to the best MSS., has modified the words of Jesus so as to avoid the apparent confession of sinfulness. (Matt. xix. 17, R.V.)

part; but in neither section does any speaker go much beyond the assertion that Jesus, in spite of his crucifixion, must yet be acknowledged as Messiah—first because God has raised him from the dead, and second because his suffering was foretold in prophecy. He is spoken of as “a man approved of God by mighty works and wonders and signs,”¹ and as one “anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good.”² Though crucified, God has made him both Lord and Messiah.³ The word “Lord” (κύριος) here means Master, not “God” (as it does when the word is printed in capitals in the Old Testament to represent the name Yahweh); but it is significant that pagans had already begun to give this title to some of their Gods, as for instance Serapis, and it certainly implies more than ordinary humanity. Both Peter and Paul are reported to have spoken of Jesus as the final Judge of men.⁴

Neither in the Acts nor in the Synoptics is there any hint of what is called the “pre-existence” of Christ. The first allusions to this are found, in both cases incidentally, in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, and in the first epistle attributed to Peter. Paul asserts that the “spiritual rock,” which according to a Jewish tradition followed the Israelites to supply them with water, was “Christ”;⁵ and the author of 1 Peter says that the Spirit which inspired the prophets to foretell the sufferings of the Messiah was “Christ” himself.⁶ From this idea of pre-existence that of Incarnation necessarily followed, and this is recognized by Paul (again quite incidentally) in 2 Cor. viii. 9, where, appealing to his readers for a generous response to the collection he was making, he quotes the example of “our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for your sakes became poor.” The statement is thrown out not as a novelty but as something well known and accepted. In Paul’s latest epistles the

¹ Acts ii. 22.⁴ Acts x. 42, xvii. 31.² Acts x. 38.⁵ 1 Cor. x. 4.³ Acts ii. 36.⁶ 1 Peter i. 11.

thought of Incarnation is enlarged upon,¹ and the loftiest terms are used of Christ as "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation . . . who is before all things and in whom all things hold together."²

The real humanity of Jesus is accepted and assumed by Paul but never emphasized. While in one place he speaks of him in contrast to Adam, the earthy, as a "man from heaven,"³ he yet recognizes that he was "born of a woman" and "of the seed of David"⁴; and he appeals to his "meekness and gentleness" as an example of the conduct he himself wishes to practise towards his opponents.⁵ His constant allusions to the death and resurrection of Jesus would have no meaning if he did not think of him as having lived a real human life in the body. It does not seem that, in raising Jesus to so lofty a place in men's thoughts, Paul was in the least conscious of infringing the strict monotheism in which as a Jew he had been trained. He never, unless in one doubtful passage, calls Jesus simply "God."⁶ In writing to the Corinthians about pagan divinities, he states categorically that "to us (Christians) there is one God, the Father"; and yet, within the circumference of this one God, he finds room for "one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things."⁷

How could this be? It is clear that Paul has either developed for himself, or accepted from others, a "Logos" doctrine of Christ, though he never uses the word. As to the origin of this doctrine we have no clear light; but Dr. Rendel Harris has shown strong reasons for believing that

¹ Phil. ii. 5-11.

² Col. i. 15-17, cf. Eph. i. 10. Paul had already spoken of Christ as "the image of God" in 2 Cor. iv. 4.

³ 1 Cor. xv. 47.

⁴ Gal. iv. 4, Rom. i. 3.

⁵ 2 Cor. x. 1.

⁶ Rom. ix. 5. The margin of R.V. shows how doubtful the meaning is.

⁷ 1 Cor. viii. 5, 6. So, in John i. 1, the Logos is not only with God (ὁ θεός) but is God (θεός) in a more inclusive sense of the word.

it is a development of the "Wisdom" conception found in the books of Proverbs, Wisdom of Solomon, and Ecclesiasticus.¹ These passages concerning the Divine Wisdom certainly appear to have been regarded by many early Christians as prophecies of Christ, and to have been pressed into service in compiling a "Testimony Book" to confute the Jews out of their own Scriptures. It may be that Jesus had spoken of himself as "Wisdom";² however that may be, it is almost certain that this identification is the origin of the belief that he was God's agent in the creation of the world.³

The Epistle to the Hebrews and the fourth Gospel both start out with the conception of Christ as the Divine Logos or "Son" (though the author of Hebrews, like Paul, avoids the use of the word "Logos"); and they clearly assume that this is generally accepted among Christians. But, unlike Paul, both authors strongly press his real humanity. The first states that he was "made in all things like unto his brethren"⁴; the second records that he was weary and thirsty, that he was seized with uncontrollable emotion by the grave of Lazarus, that he prayed to be saved from the "hour" that was coming upon him, and so forth.⁵ It is, of

¹ *The Origin of the Prologue to St. John's Gospel*, passim. The main passages from which the Wisdom doctrine was developed are Prov. iii. 19, viii. 22-31; Wisdom vii. 22-30; Ecclus. i. 1-4, xxiv. 1-9, 19-22. I do not think that Professor W. Morgan is justified in rejecting this account of the origin of the Logos doctrine on the ground that this doctrine "presupposes a dualistic metaphysic of the Philonian type" [*The Nature and Right of Religion* (1926), p. 189]. "Whether or not St. John borrowed the term Logos from Philo and his school, the corner-stone of the Johannine theology, the doctrine that 'the Word became flesh,' was not only not taken from Philo but was totally opposed to his philosophy" (Inge, *Personal Idealism and Mysticism*, p. 47).

² Compare Luke xi. 49 with Matt. xxiii. 34. Tatian, in his *Diatessaron*, combined the two passages thus: "Therefore, behold, I, the Wisdom of God, send unto you . . ." It is possible he has given the real sense.

³ Compare John i. 3, Heb. i. 2, Col. i. 16, etc., with Prov. iii. 19, viii. 22-31. See later, p. 57.

⁴ Heb. ii. 17.

⁵ John iv. 6, 7, xix. 28, xi. 33-38, xii. 27, etc.

course, in the fourth Gospel that the Logos doctrine is first made explicit. While the actual word is not used after the Prologue, being replaced by "Son," the idea underlies the whole book, and some of the expressions attributed to Jesus can only be understood if it is recognized that the speaker is thought of not merely as a man in time but as the eternal "Light" of men.¹ Whether the author has fully succeeded in his attempt to harmonize the two thoughts of Jesus, as both Divine and human, is a debated question on which I need not pronounce judgment. It is, however, clear to me that he conceived the Person of Jesus as *one*, not as two: that he thought of him as God *in* man, not as God *and* man. For him the perfect humanity of Jesus is the exhibition of the essential quality of God Himself. He represents Jesus as saying to Philip, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,"² and as praying at the last, "Keep them in thy name (i.e. character) which thou hast given me."³ This thought, which appears to be the vitally important element in the doctrine of the Incarnation, had already been adumbrated by Paul when he wrote of God shining in our hearts, "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."⁴ This, for the most inspired of the New Testament writers, was the real meaning of the Logos doctrine; this is the highest point to which the New Testament leads our thoughts of Jesus. Both Paul and "John" were not Greeks but Jews: for both of them the "nature" of God was not some subtle metaphysical essence, but quality or character: they could and did think of this essential nature as being manifested, without any doubleness, in the character of a perfect man. If we are able to receive

¹ E.g. John iii. 19-21, v. 17, vi. 41-46, viii. 56-58, x. 7-9, xiv. 6, etc. We must not press x. 30, "I and the Father are one," beyond what is warranted by the explanation given in the following verses.

² John xiv. 9.

³ John xvii. 11 (R.V.).

⁴ 2 Cor. iv. 6.

their thoughts, the idea of what is called "pre-existence" will find its fitting place. The word is not really appropriate, for it implies the existence in time of that which is essentially eternal or timeless. The real difficulty of belief in the Incarnation is that of the manifestation of the Eternal under conditions of Time; and consideration of this will follow later.¹

THE CREEDS

From the doctrine of Christ as the Logos started the long process of thought which issued in the Creeds of the Church.² We note in passing the Ebionites of Palestine, and the obscure sect of the "Alogi" at Rome, who rejected the Pauline and Johannine ideas, and appear to have been content to regard Jesus as prophet and teacher, the giver of a higher law than that of Moses. So far as they held a Christology at all, this would seem to have been of the type known as "Adoptionist"—the theory that Jesus was simply a man who, on the occasion of his baptism, was raised into the position of the Son of God. A far more serious danger was that presented in the second century by Gnosticism—which, exaggerating Paul's expression about the "man from heaven," and regarding matter (and therefore the human body) as wholly evil, made the humanity of Jesus a *semblance*, his personality that of the mere phantom of a man. It was against such teaching (technically known as "Docetic"), in its early stages, that Ignatius protested in his letters (about A.D. 115), when he insisted that Jesus was "truly" born and "truly" lived and died. The Apologists who followed were so fully occupied with presenting the reasonableness of

¹ See below, pp. 54 ff.

² I have tried to give a popular account of the main features of this development in the second part of a small book, *Christ in Christian Thought* (1919). References to standard works are given there, and need hardly be repeated here.

Christianity that they tended to overlook its historical foundations—with the exception of the author of the Epistle to Diognetus, who wrote impressively of the Divine love manifested in the Incarnation. So did Irenæus (Bishop of Lyons, in Gaul, A.D. 178), the champion of “Catholic” Christianity against Gnosticism. Irenæus held strongly to the real humanity of Jesus, who “recapitulated” in himself all that had ever been of worth in man, and therefore fulfilled in himself man’s true nature and destiny. His thought is free from the difficulties of a “double nature” in Christ; at the same time his doctrine of recapitulation, though it has some support in a sentence by Paul,¹ tended towards the idea of “impersonal” humanity, which robs the character of Jesus of its individuality, and makes him rather Man than *a man*.

The opening of the third century was marked by a certain contrast between East and West: between the philosophic Christianity, sunny and optimistic, of the great Alexandrians, Clement and his successor Origen, and the sterner and more forensic form which it assumed in the hands of the North African lawyer Tertullian. The Alexandrians based their philosophy on the doctrine of the incarnate Logos, but without any deep insight into the kind of man that Jesus actually was. Tertullian, like a true Latin, had little use for philosophy, and preferred the warmer Pauline word “Son” to the more abstract “Logos.” It was he, followed by Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, who mainly gave form to the Christianity of the West, which we have inherited. Tertullian is strong, as against the Gnostics, on the dignity of human flesh and the true humanity of Jesus; but his legal mind tended to obscure the love of God, who becomes in his thought Judge rather than Father.

As the century proceeded there was a considerable reaction, both in East and West, against the philosophic

¹ Eph. i. 10, “to sum up all things in Christ.”

Christianity of Alexandria. The doctrine of the Logos seemed to many to complicate the idea of God, and to endanger monotheistic belief. The reaction took two main forms, according as attention was directed towards the human or the Divine side of the person of Christ. In a third form it tried to present him as neither truly Divine nor truly human, but between the two.

(1) The Church at Antioch had taken a very different line from that at Alexandria, being devoted to the study of the Gospels; which produced in it a warm appreciation of the human character of Jesus. By Paul of Samosata (Bishop of Antioch, A.D. 262) a doctrine akin to the Ebionite Christology was to some extent revived, and Christ was again thought of in Adoptionist terms as rising from the human level to the Divine. A few years later his doctrines were condemned by a synod of Bishops held at Antioch.

(2) In the West the reaction took a different form. Starting from the unity of God, and holding (along with all other Christians) that Jesus was Divine, Sabellius and others were content to speak of him as simply "God," and to hold therefore that God Himself suffered on the Cross. There is, surely, a deep truth in this;¹ but the main tendency of the Sabellian simplification was to exalt the Divinity of Christ at the cost of his humanity—a "docetic" tendency which has always been present in many truly Christian minds.² The views of Sabellius were vigorously opposed both by Origen and by Tertullian, and were later condemned as heresy.

(3) In a third and more serious form the reaction against what was now taking shape as orthodox belief broke out early in the fourth century. The formidable Arian movement

¹ See later, pp. 203 ff.

² McGiffert has shown that Sabellianism was simply a revolt of non-philosophical Christian minds against the refinements of the philosophers, who seemed to be making Christ a subordinate Being while professing to hold that he was one with God. "What evil am I doing in glorifying Christ?" was the defence of one of the Sabellian thinkers, Noetus. (McGiffert, *The God of the Early Christians*, pp. 99 ff.)

was named from Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria who had been indirectly influenced by Paul of Samosata. He gave out that the Logos was a Being created in time, who had taken the place of the ordinary human soul in Jesus. Christ therefore was neither truly Divine nor truly human, but somewhere between the two—like the demigods of pagan religion. Arianism, in fact, was undoubtedly a reaction in the direction of pagan mythology. Its strongest opponent was Athanasius, a young Alexandrian, who soon became the leader of orthodoxy. The conflict was threatening the very life of the Church when Constantine, who had just become sole Emperor, and had (in name at least) become a Christian, summoned a Council of bishops to meet at Nicæa, in A.D. 325, to decide what was really the Church's doctrine. This is the first of the Ecumenical Councils, and its decision, somewhat enlarged at a later date, is in the Prayer Book as the "Nicene Creed." Its main point is that Christ was declared, at the urgent insistence of Athanasius, to be "of one substance" with the Father; and all who held the Arian view were condemned as heretical. (This anathema was removed from the later form of the Creed.) Arianism was the first "heresy" strictly so called, for the Church had not previously expressed its collective mind.¹

The effect of this great decision was, at first at any rate, rather to shatter than to unite the Church. For a time the Arians triumphed almost throughout the East, and Athanasius was left without support except in the West. Later in the fourth century Arianism faded out, and the tendency to magnify the Divinity at the expense of the humanity of Christ was revived by Apollinaris (Bishop of Laodicea, A.D. 390). He accepted the view of Arius that the human soul of Jesus was replaced by the Logos; but for him the Logos was wholly Divine—only human in the sense that an

¹ For the Arian and other controversies see R. M. Jones, *The Church's Debt to Heretics*, especially ch. iv.

archetypal form of ideal humanity existed in God Himself. What he denied, in the interest of the unity of Christ's person, was that Jesus shared our nature with its weakness and limitations. His theory, which may be roughly stated as giving us in Christ a Divine soul in a human body, was set aside at the second Ecumenical Council at Constantinople in 381 A.D. The "Nicene Creed" of the Prayer Book is generally supposed to represent the decision then reached.

The fifth century is marked by the revival of the old controversies in a new form. The Church at Antioch retained its interest in the humanity of our Lord, but tried to reconcile this with the Nicene formula by supposing that there was in him (as it were) a second and Divine Person, whose unity with the human was to be explained on ethical lines, like the unity of husband and wife in an ideal marriage. The best known name in this school of thought is that of Nestorius, though it is doubtful how far he really held the two-person theory attributed to him. A bitter feud broke out between him and Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria, who maintained the unity of Christ's person by supposing that the human element was wholly absorbed and lost in the Divine. Into the rather squalid episodes of this conflict it is needless to go. At a third Council at Ephesus in A.D. 431, Cyril succeeded in getting Nestorius condemned and banished, and the Nestorians cut off from the Catholic Church. The views of Cyril, which were really a form of "Docetism" from which the humanity of Jesus had disappeared, were now triumphant, and his followers proceeded to ride roughshod over their opponents. Their extravagance provoked the wrath of Pope Leo, of Rome, who persuaded the Emperor to summon a fourth Council, at Chalcedon, in A.D. 451.

The Council of Chalcedon reached a decision—based on a celebrated letter drafted by Pope Leo—which, while professing to add nothing to what the Church had already declared, placed side by side with the Nicene formula—

that Christ was "of one substance" with the Father—the statement that he was "of one substance" with ourselves.¹ Christ was "to be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved and concurring in one person and one substance."²

This Chalcedonian Decree virtually completed the long task of defining the Person of Christ, and is still the standard of orthodox Christian belief. The formula that in Christ two Natures are combined in one Person simply means, as Professor Gwatkin wrote, that in the Church's view "he is as Divine as the Father, and as human as ourselves."³ How this could be is not explained. The formula throws no light whatever on the central problem of Christology, how the Infinite could find expression in the finite, the Eternal in a time-series of events. The difficulty of holding the theory of a double nature has always led to the easy plan of forgetting one of the two elements, and endeavouring to exalt our Lord by ignoring his real humanity. One use of the Creed, however, is to enable us to show that this is not truly "orthodox."

Creeds and declarations of belief always have their origin in *controversy*, and their purpose is to answer questions that at a particular time have been acutely debated. They never give, and in the nature of things they cannot give, a full and rounded and balanced statement of Truth, putting its elements in their right proportions. They throw no positive light upon the questions that perplex our minds. Rather,

¹ The critical word in both cases is *ὁμοούσιος*, that is, having the same *οὐσία* or "essence." The difficulty, of course, is that the "essence" or "substance" of God was regarded as radically different from that of man. The word for "nature" is *φύσις*, which is almost equivalent to *οὐσία*.

² This last word is not *οὐσία* but *ὑπόστασις*, translated "person" in the case of the Trinity.

³ *The Knowledge of God*, Vol. II., p. 112.

they are like buoys that mark the deep-water channel outside the mouth of a river, indicating tracks that a large vessel cannot take with safety. At Nicæa such a danger-signal was erected against the demigod theory of Arius; at Constantinople against the idea that Christ had no human soul; at Ephesus against the notion that he was two persons in one; and at Chalcedon against the loss of his humanity by fusion with the Divine.

While we may be devoutly thankful that, even through unchristian strife and contention, the Church was eventually led to declare its belief in the two things that really mattered—the Divinity and the humanity of Christ—we may rightly question the assumptions on which this whole process of creed-making was based: that it was necessary, in order to preserve the unity of the Church, to attempt to define with such precision her intellectual belief; that true belief could be ascertained and preserved by counting votes; that it was right to use the Church's authority, and even that of the secular arm, to cut off from the fellowship vast bodies of professing Christians, like the Nestorians on the one side and the followers of Cyril on the other,¹ whose theories were held to be imperfect. The most lamentable feature of this sad history is that, in violent disputes about his nature, Jesus himself, his character and his spirit, was by most of the combatants on both sides almost totally forgotten.²

THE QUESTION TO-DAY

The question—What are we to think of Jesus Christ?—which fascinated the minds of Christians during the early

¹ Known by the ugly name of Monophysites, as holding that in Christ there was only a "single nature," of course Divine.

² "If Antioch and Alexandria could have been kept from the bitterness and blindness of controversy, they might soon have coalesced in the common faith, with no other difference than that of wholesomely and helpfully occupying opposite and complementary points of view, each professing also to hold the truth of the other." (Du Bose, *The Ecumenical Councils*, p. 225.)

centuries of our era, has never ceased to press for answer. Ignore and evade it as we may, it meets us round the corner and insists on being faced. Modern critical study of the Gospel records has but thrown up into clearer light than has been known since the first century the wonder of his character. "I wrote this book," says his latest biographer, a distinguished literary critic, who is unable to accept the views called orthodox, "because I needed to write it. The time had come when it had become urgent upon me to make up my mind about Jesus."¹ "The nature of Jesus was altogether richer and more creative than his hard-and-fast interpreters are able to conceive."² But the lines along which the Greek Christians tried to find an answer will no longer lead us anywhere. We do not think, as they did, of the nature of God or man as a kind of metaphysical "substance" or "essence" (οὐσία). For them the problem was how two such natures, believed to be radically different and even opposite, could be combined in a single person. They found no solution to this problem, and ended by simply stating it as a fact. Probably, in the terms in which they stated it, the problem was insoluble.

For us the question must be put in terms not of Essence but of Personality. The Greeks had no word for Personality, and the very idea as we conceive it had probably never occurred to them.³ Our problem is bound up with that of personality in God, which is the subject of the following chapter. Assuming for the present that there is a real sense in which we may speak of God as a personal Being, is His

¹ J. Middleton Murry, *The Life of Jesus* (1926), p. 7.

² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

³ The nearest word for "person" in Greek is πρόσωπον, which means a face or mask. For the "Persons" of the Trinity another word, ὑπόστασις, was used, the original meaning of which was "substance," and which is so translated in Heb. xi. 1 (A.V.). Both these were frequently translated into Latin by *persona*, and both are used in the passage quoted on p. 50 from the Chalcedonian definition: "concurring in one *person* and one *substance*." (See further, pp. 134, 164 ff.)

personality so far akin to our own that it can be expressed in the personality of a perfect man? And is human personality at its best an instrument through which and in which the personality or character of God can find adequate expression? Stated thus, the question seems perhaps less incapable of being answered.

As soon as we have stated it in personal terms, we have made the question one that reaches deeper than our intellect can fathom. For, as was shown in the last chapter,¹ all our knowledge of persons and their qualities depends upon an insight which is of the nature of faith rather than of demonstration. Yet we need not hesitate for a moment in calling it "knowledge." It is indeed knowledge of a kind that brings us deeper into the truth of things than intellectual knowledge can ever do; for the latter is reached by the use of *concepts*, and these are more like convenient diagrams than true pictures of reality. They are obtained by ignoring the individuality of things and attending only to their likenesses; but, as we rise in the scale of being from matter to life and then to persons, individual differences become more and more important as revelations of reality. In the last resort, our acquaintance with living things, and still more of persons, is much more than intellectual knowledge; it is based on insight or intuition, such as we have into the working of our own minds. As Canon Streeter has ably shown in his recent book *Reality*,² there are "Two Ways of Knowledge," Scientific and Intuitive, both of which must be used, in the study not only of religion but of physical life and human history, each "way" complementing and checking the other.³ The second way is frankly and avowedly "anthropomorphic," in the sense that we interpret what we find in terms of our own inner life; but "what is reached by

¹ Ch. i., p. 23.

² Streeter, *op. cit.*, ch. iv.

³ Compare what was said in the last chapter (pp. 32 ff.) in regard to "the Idea of the Holy."

anthropomorphic intuition is continually supplemented, and at every point controlled, by the methods of pure science.”¹ It is only by an intellectual method that thought can be held clearly, expressed in words, and communicated to others; but the limitations of this method must be continually borne in mind.

Stated in intellectual terms, the question before us is this: Are the Divine and the human fundamentally akin, so that a perfect human life can be an adequate expression of the true quality of God? Have God and man something in common? I am convinced that the old conception of the Logos, Greek in origin but partially Hebraized through assimilation with the Jewish idea of the Divine Wisdom, marks an attempt to reach an affirmative answer. But it has had its day, and perhaps it smacks too much of mythology to meet our modern needs. Our intellectual difficulties centre in matters that are beyond personality as we commonly conceive it: they arise when we try to imagine how the Infinite can express itself in terms of the finite, the Eternal be encompassed with the limitations of time. The Infinite and the Eternal are not indeed the only “attributes” of the Divine, but they are those that present most difficulty. Let us therefore consider whether we have reason to conceive of anything in the human that is of the nature of the infinite and eternal, and anything in the Divine that is of the nature of the finite and temporal.

(1) There certainly does appear to be an element in human consciousness that partakes of the nature of the infinite. We can set no limits to the field of possible objects of thought. Our consciousness is, in the phrase used by Principal John Caird, “the form of an infinite content.”² To suggest that

¹ Streeter, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

² J. Caird, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 120 ff. That which is finite in some respects may certainly be thought of as infinite in others: we can, for example, conceive a strip of space limited in width but unlimited in length, and so on.

there can be any real existence that may not become an object of thought is a contradiction in terms; for in conceiving it we have already made it essentially such, imperfect as our conception of it may be. However wide the field of consciousness, there is always more to be known.¹ Further, the experience of self-consciousness, which every person possesses, itself contains an unlimited element. Imagine yourself to be drawing a picture of yourself as you are at any moment: that picture would represent you drawing a picture, and that picture would contain another picture, and so on without limit. There is, in all consciousness, when fully developed, that which altogether transcends the narrow bounds with which the finite mind seems at first sight to be encompassed.²

Again, it may well be that the human mind or soul, though it seems to develop in time, with the developing brain, contains in reality an element of the eternal. For how can that which is aware of the succession of events be itself only an item in the stream? How can the mind, which perceives the relation between events as *before* and *after*, itself be nothing but an event in time? One would be inclined to say that it is only from the standpoint of the eternal that the stream of time can be envisaged. This is no doubt a bit of idealistic philosophy, which is out of fashion to-day; but I cannot see that its criticisms of empirical ways of thought have ever been adequately answered.³ I must indeed frankly

¹ "The present organization of human mind introduces its possessor to a practical infinitude of possibility." (Julian Huxley, *Essays of a Biologist*, p. 55.)

² There is also the fact of the subconscious part of the self, which reaches to unplumbed depths. This will be considered in the next chapter (pp. 79 ff.). The above are only suggestions of an infinite element in human consciousness, from the intellectual side. From the point of view of religious experience very much more could be said. (See article "The Infinite in Religious Experience," by Dr. G. F. Barbour, *Hibbert Journal*, October 1926.)

³ For such criticisms see T. H. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, pp. 59 ff. ("a consciousness of related events, as related, cannot consist in those events"); James Ward, *The Realm of Ends*, pp. 470 ff. ("experiences are out

confess myself incapable of conceiving *how* a thinking self which is beyond time can be developed in time; and yet experience seems to assure me that it is so. I only mention the point in order to suggest that, if difficulty confronts us in believing that Jesus was an eternal Being incarnate in a historic Person, a measure of the same difficulty may present itself in regard to each finite mind.

(2) Turning to the other side, we may ask whether there can be a finite and human element in God. If, as we are taught to believe, He is Infinite, this can only mean that He is not limited by anything else—that there can be nothing which is outside Himself. We must think of Him as “filling all things.” But is it not possible that in some way, of which we can perhaps catch only vague hints, He should *limit Himself*, without ceasing to be at the same time infinite? Apollinaris suggested that there is in God the archetypal image of the perfect man; and the Church generally has taught that God is eternally Son as well as Father. Is it unbelievable that, if any such differentiations have place within the unity of the Divine nature, God should so far limit Himself in the person of the Son as to take our nature upon Him? Paul wrote that Christ Jesus, though equality with God was within his grasp, refused it, and “emptied himself” for our sakes. That is, he thought that the nature of God, which in Christ is revealed as love at its highest, expressed itself in the way love does express itself—by self-limitation, self-sacrifice: as when Francis of Assisi stripped himself of all property, and when Father Damien gave up his life for the lepers.

of time, though functionally related to it”), etc. They seem to be ignored by such modern empiricists as Professor Alexander in *Space, Time and Deity*, and even Professor Lloyd Morgan in *Emergent Evolution*. The latter, however, recognizes that in all human *purpose* there is something that transcends time: “some temporal interpenetration of first and last” (*Life, Mind and Spirit*, p. 286). There appears to be a similar interpenetration also whenever we appreciate the *meaning* of a work of art, such as a poem or piece of music.

But the idea of the Logos, developed in association with that of the Divine Wisdom regarded as God's agent in creation, helped men to conceive that self-limitation in God did not *begin* with the Incarnation, but was an eternal quality of the Divine. They saw the same principle at work in His self-revelation through the prophets, and even in creation itself. This is why the first leaders of Christian thought attributed the work of creation to Christ.¹ "All things were made by him." Can we follow them here? At least it is clear that in creation, however we conceive it (the Theistic position being assumed), something comes into being which is not (as it were) a part of God Himself: a world appears on the scene which is an *object* to the Divine consciousness: and so far the Divine nature is self-limited. This is still more clear when there emerge in the world beings endowed with intelligence and freedom, which have the power, if they choose, to set their own wills against the will of God, and (partially at least) to frustrate His purpose. If the work of bringing free persons into being was itself a self-limitation of the Divine, it gave rise to a still higher manifestation of the same principle. The supreme example of Divine self-limitation—in the Incarnation and the Cross—is seen to be the most perfect expression in time of that which from all eternity has been the nature of God.

If we look at the Incarnation in this way, we can perhaps see that, in becoming Man through self-limitation, God did not cease to be God. In relation to us, at any rate, He became on the contrary more truly and fully God than ever before, because His nature was now capable of being more adequately understood and known. The more completely He became man, the deeper the humiliation and self-sacrifice, the greater was the love displayed, the fuller the revelation of Himself. This is why it has mattered so much to the Church to safeguard the complete humanity of Jesus. She has never

¹ See above, p. 43.

really glorified her Lord by denying it or explaining it away; for the more truly human God became the more adequately He expressed in Christ His nature, which is love.

It follows, then, that the real meaning and worth of the confession of the Divine Humanity of Christ is the conviction which it brings us that in him we have a *revelation* of God in terms that we can understand—not by the intellect only but by the response of our whole personality to the revelation. May it not be said that anyone whose inward eyes are opened to perceive and accept this revelation—who is able to think of God in terms of Jesus Christ, and feels that without Christ his knowledge of God would be vague and uncertain—and whose will is captured for living out in his own life what he has seen in Jesus—is fundamentally an *orthodox* Christian, whatever may be his intellectual attitude towards the Creeds of the Church? However we may define the word “revelation,” it must mean something quite different from the presentation by God to man of an intellectual theory or doctrine, to be passively accepted on authority. It must involve the opening of the man’s inward eyes to perceive and appropriate that which is being revealed; it must require for its acceptance *faith* and not only *belief*. In other words, acceptance of the Divine Humanity of Jesus must be a religious and not merely an intellectual act. “No man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit.”¹

NOTE ON “NATURAL” AND “SUPERNATURAL”

I may, quite rightly, be challenged to say whether the foregoing treatment of the Divine Humanity of Christ involves a dualistic conception of the universe: whether Jesus is regarded as a miracle, in the sense of an intrusion from a supernatural order of being into the natural order to which human life normally belongs. Or should we interpret him on monistic lines, as the highest product of the evolutionary process? The answer I am inclined to give is that,

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 3. (See further, pp. 85 ff., 171, 211.)

while the urge of the human mind is always towards unity and the breaking down of dualisms, the time does not seem to me to have yet come for a purely monistic system of thought. I am not satisfied with any such system that I have met with. Such intellectual constructions as those of Spinoza, Professor Alexander, or Professor Lloyd Morgan, so far as I can understand them, do not seem to me to give enough room for the activities of the human spirit. For practical purposes—that is, for the purposes of the best life that can be lived—I find it needful to distinguish between the natural and the “supernatural,” or, as I should prefer to say, the spiritual. But I cannot regard these two orders of existence as wholly disparate, or as only touching one another in occasional “miracles.” Rather, they seem to me to be related somewhat as life is related to inanimate matter. As life absorbs and transforms and vitalizes such matter, so the spiritual is always seeking to take up the natural into itself, to transform it and reach expression through it. Every self-conscious or personal life is (or may be) an agent in this process, as the person yields himself to the Divine Purpose and allows it to work through him. By his agency the natural order is in part transformed: it becomes different, in some degree, from what it would have been if his dedicated life had not been lived. From the purely “natural” point of view such transformation may be regarded as miraculous—but only in the same sense as that in which life works “miracles” on inanimate matter. From a higher standpoint the transformation may be called natural: it is in accord with the “nature” of the world taken as a whole, including the spiritual.

The prophets and moral leaders of humanity have been the chief agents through which the spiritual order has been able to permeate and transform the natural; and he whose whole life was dedicated to God and dominated by His Spirit stands out in this regard from all the rest. His “mighty works,” which we cannot (in my judgment at least) cut out from the story of his life without destroying it, appear to be pre-eminent examples of the power of the spiritual to transform the natural—differing in degree, but not in kind, from powers that may be exercised in and through any dedicated person, according to his (or her) capacity for God. Yet, as Bishop Temple points out, “What we find in Christian experience is witness, not to a Man uniquely inspired, but to God living a human life.”¹ The union in him of Divine and human, of spiritual

¹ *Christus Veritas*, p. 139.

and natural, was (so far as I am able to judge) unique in kind and not only in degree. This appears to me to be independent of the manner of his birth. Whether he entered this world by "miracle," with only one human parent, or through natural generation, does not affect what he was and what he did; in either case the powers and blessings of the spiritual order were uniquely manifested in him; and, in proportion, the natural order was transformed.

My own position is therefore provisionally, though not rigidly, dualistic; but it appears that even a doctrine of thorough-going monism need not prevent a person from recognizing the Divine Humanity of Jesus. No one in recent years has stated the monistic position in stronger terms than Professor Lloyd Morgan, who writes: "If an impartial historical survey should lead to the conclusion that the nisus towards deity has culminated in one unique Individual, there is, so far as I can see, nothing in the naturalistic interpretation of emergent evolution which precludes the acceptance of this conclusion."¹ "If it savour of Mysticism to say that Divine Personality shines through the unique Individuality of the Christ, are not all who subscribe to a Logos doctrine mystics?"²

¹ *Emergent Evolution*, p. 31.

² *Life, Mind and Spirit*, p. 313.

SUMMARY

THE question of the "existence" of God is really the question whether there is a Being of whom such things can be said as Jesus said about his Father: it is the *qualitative* aspect that gives it vital importance. Religion tends to a personal thought of God, as among the Hebrews; philosophy to a more impersonal, as among the Greeks. Yet in both cases there was conflict between the two conceptions. Many Greek Christians seem to have found in Christ the only God of whom they felt the need; but their leaders, stressing the importance of the worship of one supreme God, tended towards philosophic and impersonal ideas. A strain of agnosticism was present even among the later mystics, but was usually balanced by the sense that God had been revealed in Christ.

In modern times we approach the question (*a*) through Science, which seems antagonistic to ideas of Divine Personality; (*b*) through Philosophy, which, if it assures us that behind all things there is Mind and Purpose, has not succeeded in proving that this is necessarily good; (*c*) through Psychology, which enlarges our conception of human personality, shows the extent to which (in the subconscious region especially) personalities share a common life, and helps us to conceive the possibility of immanent Divine Personality; (*d*) through Religious Experience, which, while it affords strong testimony to Personality in God, needs to be corroborated and checked by processes of thought; and lastly (*e*) through the revelation of God brought by Jesus Christ in his unique experience of God as Father. Behind this we may assume depths in the Divine nature which to us are unrevealed and inconceivable.

CHAPTER III

PERSONALITY IN GOD

THE question whether, or in what sense, we can rightly attach the concept of Personality to the Reality we call God is bound up in the closest manner with that of the nature of Jesus Christ which we have just been considering. If we do not believe that the word "God" stands for any Reality that can be known by man; or if, short of such complete agnosticism, we are content with a purely impersonal idea of God as the principle of order or natural law in the universe, as were the Stoics of old; then the assertion that Jesus was God in man can have little or no meaning for us. More than that: our veneration for the mind and character of Jesus will be, if we think the matter out, severely shaken. While we may well believe that, in his human limitation, he was in many respects the child of his age and race—that he thought of the constitution of the world, of the history of his people and of their Scriptures, much as he had himself been taught to think; and while we may accept such intellectual limitations without impairing our sense of his moral and spiritual insight; it is otherwise with his thought of God. That thought underlay the whole of the message of life that he brought to men; and, if his personal faith in God as Father was dependent on a crude and anthropomorphic conception which we are bound to discard, then his way of life is not in accordance with the truth of things as we know it, and he can hardly be for us the Lord of life and thought. Christianity as Life involves, as we have seen,¹ a "world-outlook": assumptions as to the

¹ Ch. i., pp. 20 ff.

nature of the universe and God which we must examine before we can intelligently rest in Christianity as Truth.

In my own judgment, too great weight can hardly be given to our Lord's intuition of the character and quality of his "Father in heaven," prepared for as it was by the inward experience of the prophets who preceded him, and supported as it is by that of the best of his followers ever since he lived. If, as I believe, there is a right place for Authority in religion, we find it pre-eminently here. As Percival says of his sister, in Tennyson's *Holy Grail*:

She sent the deathless passion in her eyes
Through him and made him hers, and laid her mind
On him, and he believed in her belief.

And yet many of us cannot be finally satisfied with a passive belief resting on authority—not even if it is the authority of Christ himself. Revelation, if it is to awaken lasting conviction, must be revelation not only to us but *in* us, as Paul says of himself¹; we must have our own inward eyes opened to perceive the truth, if it is to be truth for us. And any intellectual statements we make about it must, if they are to be finally accepted by us as true, settle down into a coherent system with the rest of our knowledge of the world. How stands it, then, with Christ's alleged revelation of the quality and character of God? Is there for us a real Being of whom the things can be said that Jesus said about his Father? And, if so, on what grounds does our conviction rest?

This seems to me the vital question that is at stake when we ask for proof of the "existence of God." What matters is not that some sort of Supreme Being should "exist," but that we should be convinced that the *kind* of God to whom Jesus prayed is a Reality and not a figment of his (and our own) imagination. The question involves *quality*; it is not

¹ Gal. i. 16. (See pp. 58, 85 ff.)

one of bare existence. Is there a God whom we can reasonably approach in prayer, who cares for us individually, who has a purpose for the world that we can in some measure appreciate, a place for each of us to take in its fulfilment, and help for us that we may take it worthily? Is there a God who does particular things in history, as (for instance) revealing Himself in the experience of saints and prophets, and above all in the life and work, death and resurrection, of Jesus? Can we expect Him to reveal Himself to ourselves, if we seek Him and wait for Him? These are questions of the kind that requires an answer when we ask whether God "exists." Such questions are not of mere theoretical interest, like that of the existence of the ether of space. They are of the deepest practical importance. The God we want must be more than a Being whose theoretical existence rounds off, or makes more intelligible, a conception of the universe. He must be One who counts as the supreme factor in all our life and conduct, whose reality matters to us, above everything else, each day we live. That, I take it, indicates what is really at stake when we ask, as the would-be follower of Jesus is bound to ask, whether God is "personal."¹ Christianity professes to give us an affirmative answer; we are now asking whether we can be convinced that that answer will bear rational criticism.

RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

Speaking broadly, there would seem to have been throughout history, since man reached the stage of reflective consciousness, a certain conflict between the answers given to this question, according as attention was directed (*a*) to man's religious experience, or (*b*) to the constitution of the world and the way things actually happen in it. Intuitive awareness of an Object corresponding to religious experience

¹ Compare W. Newton Clarke, *Outline of Christian Theology*, pp. 102 ff.

has led to one kind of answer; intellectual inquiry into the way the universe seems to work has led to a different one. We may take the Hebrew prophetic and the Greek philosophic conceptions of God as typical of the two conclusions—though, as we cannot fail to notice, a measure of the conflict appears in both.

The Hebrew character, exceptionally developed on the ethical side, and capable of deep moral and religious intuitions, nourished itself on an intensely personal thought of God, of which the Book of Psalms is the best record. Yahweh had taken the people of Israel into His own possession, had entered into a covenant with them, had led and protected them; and, so long as they remained faithful to Him, He would guard them from all evil. If they were not loyal to Him He would punish them with disaster.

Thou hast made the Most High thy habitation;
There shall no evil befall thee,
Neither shall any plague come nigh thy tent. . . .
Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him,
I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.
He shall call upon me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble;
I will deliver him, and honour him.¹

This faith is taught on every page of the law-books, especially Deuteronomy; and the deepening and moralizing of the thought of Yahweh and His requirements, in the experiences and utterances of the greater prophets, did but intensify the assurance of His personal character and purpose. So the Hebrews were taught, and so they believed. But more and more, as time went on, the facts of experience seemed to belie their faith. Troubles came upon them, not always through their own sins, and Yahweh seemed indifferent. Josiah, a good king, who “turned not aside to the right hand or to the left,” and who had just carried

¹ Psa. xci. 9-15.

through a great reform in religious practice in obedience to the "book of the law" discovered in the temple, was defeated and killed in battle by the king of Egypt at Megiddo.¹ After this a new note of perplexity makes itself felt in Hebrew literature. It is first heard, perhaps, in Jeremiah:

Righteous art thou, O Yahweh, when I expostulate with thee: wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they at ease that deal very treacherously? ²

God did not, in fact, behave towards His people in the personal way they had always been taught and had believed He would behave: and doubt and perplexity began to oppress their minds. This experience dominates some of the later Psalms like the thirty-seventh and the seventy-third; it forms the keynote of the great poem of Job; and it reaches its climax in the dreary pessimism of Ecclesiastes. Job complains that it is useless to reason out his cause with God, for He is infinite and can always put a finite man in the wrong; ³ and even if this were not so he cannot find the God with whom he longs to plead. The more the greatness of God is felt, the more He seems to be removed from men.

Oh that I knew where I might find him,
That I might come even to his seat. . . .
Behold, I go forward, but he is not there,
And backward, but I cannot perceive him.⁴

The author of Ecclesiastes gives up as hopeless the task of finding any "moral government" of the world of men:

All things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked. . . . Man cannot find out the work that God hath done from the beginning even to the end.⁵

¹ 2 Kings xxii., xxiii.

² Jer. xii. 1.

³ Job ix. 29-33.

⁴ Job xxiii. 3, 8.

⁵ Eccl. ix. 2, iii. 11, etc. The book appears to have been extensively edited, for purposes of edification; but there is little doubt that the author's feeling was one of moral despair. To some of us it is a comfort to find our own questionings expressed in the words of a Biblical writer,

It is clear that even the Hebrew mind, saturated as it was with instinctive feeling of the righteous personality of God, often found it hard to justify this by reflection on the course things took in the world of men. Like Tennyson's Arthur, when all his hopes had been overthrown, many of them could say:

I found Him in the shining of the stars,
I marked Him in the flowering of His fields,
But in His ways with men I find Him not.¹

Yet nothing in history is more remarkable than the persistence, through all discouragement and disillusion, of the prophetic faith that a personal God was still directing the course of human events. Without the persistence of such a faith in a corner of the Roman world, it is hard to see how the message of Jesus could ever have been received, or Christianity ever have begun.

If we turn to the Greek world, we see the crude anthropomorphism of the popular polytheistic religion at war with the higher thoughts, both intellectual and ethical, reached by the philosophers. It was this that brought Socrates to his condemnation (by a body of judges whose attitude was that of the prejudiced crowd) on the charge of disbelieving in the Athenian Gods and corrupting the youth.² Himself intensely religious, he seemed to the mass of Athenians, whose confused and immoral ideas about their Gods he exposed with devastating questions, little better than an atheist. Among the philosophers we find indeed that Plato developed a lofty monotheism which at times appears not altogether unlike that reached by seers and prophets in Israel³; but for the most part the idea of God became more and more bereft of human qualities and detached from relation to the actual

¹ Tennyson, *The Passing of Arthur*.

² F. J. Church, *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, p. lx.

³ *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, art. "God (Greek)," Vol. VI., p. 282.

lives of men. The God of Aristotle is the One supreme Energy of which nothing can be predicated except that It is the cause of all things, and of which it is impossible to say that It loves or can be loved. Even with the Stoics, noble in many respects as is their ethical ideal, all that man needs or can expect, for help in his moral struggles, must be found in himself. With the Epicureans the Gods, though their existence is not denied, live in serene detachment from the affairs of men, whose attentions they do not require. The great dramatists Æschylus and Sophocles, while accepting the existing religious order, sought to purify and ennoble it by bringing home to men's minds "the eternity and divinity of the moral law"¹; while in Euripides criticism of the immoralities attributed to the Gods is not far from scepticism as to their existence. The rise of the Mystery cults in Greece, by which men sought for assurance of a new and immortal life through union with some divinity, was in part a natural reaction towards a more personal conception of the Divine, and the glow of actual, however imperfectly moralized, religious experience. It undoubtedly marks a revival of personal religion, a demand for something that was not supplied either by the old Gods or by philosophy. The former, though conceived as crudely personal, were related not so much to the individual as to the city or state; and the God of the latter was too remote and abstract to be known in personal experience.

THE GOD OF JEWS AND GREEKS

Thus it was that in the cities of the Græco-Roman world of the first century, where Jewish synagogues had been set up in the midst of pagan people, some of whom were drawn to them through the yearning, to which we have just alluded,

¹ *Ibid.*, art. "Greek Religion," Vol. VI., pp. 414 ff. The whole of this fine article will well repay study.

for a better religion, the message of Christ was proclaimed to both Jews and Greeks. Both in some measure responded to it; but, as Dr. McGiffert has ably shown,¹ the nature of the response differed in the two cases. The Jews believed profoundly in a personal God of supreme righteousness—however difficult some of them found it to square their faith with the happenings of history—and to them, if Christianity presented a problem other than that involved in a crucified Messiah, it was how to find room, within their strict monotheistic faith, for the worship of One who, they were told, had been a human being like themselves. To many Greeks, on the other hand, trained in polytheism and belief in semi-divine heroes, the worship of a deified human being presented no difficulty at all. They were ready to welcome Christ as their Lord and Saviour—a more potent Saviour than the Lords Attis or Serapis—without troubling their minds about his relation to a supreme God (if there were one). In presenting Christianity to such as these the real problem was to convince them that they needed a God superior to Jesus Christ, and that the God of the Jews met that need. It is this, no doubt, that explains the ease with which some unphilosophic minds embraced Sabellianism, which virtually made Christ the only God.² Dr. McGiffert suggests that it also explains the attempt of Marcion to get rid of the God of the Jews—a God (he thought) of vengeance and not of love—as inferior to the true God whom Christ brought to men.

However this may be, the efforts of most of the Christian apologists and theologians were directed to pressing the importance of the worship of one supreme God—whether thought of as the personal God of the Jews or as the Absolute of philosophy—and to showing that there was room in such a religion, without impairing its monotheism, for the worship of Christ as Divine. For the latter purpose they used, of

¹ *The God of the Early Christians*, passim.

² See above, p. 47.

course, the conception of the Logos, which seemed exactly to fit the case. While the Absolute could not be spoken of in personal terms, His representative, the Logos, could be and was. By Clement of Alexandria especially the process of stripping off all personal attributes from the ultimate God was carried to great lengths. Dr. T. R. Glover says:

For the Abba Father whom Jesus loved he substituted the great Unknowable, and then he had to bring in a figure unfamiliar to the thought of Jesus—the Logos, whom he clothed with many of the attributes of the Father of Jesus, and then identified with Jesus himself. Not unnaturally in this combination the historic is outweighed by the theoretic element, and indeed receives very little attention. The thought of Incarnation is to Clement much more important than the Personality.¹

Most of the early Greek Fathers of the Church found that the exigencies of philosophy compelled them to reach the idea of God by detaching from Him the personal qualities that had enriched not only the Jewish conception of Yahweh but still more our Lord's thought of his Father.² It is probable that this explains the infrequency in their writings of expressions of personal devotion like those in the Hebrew Psalms. One might have expected that such devotion would at least have found expression towards Christ, but "except in the writings of Ignatius piety towards Christ finds no larger and no more vivid expression than piety towards God. . . . In these circumstances I can only suggest that the lack may have been due to the divided object of worship."³ The God of philosophy remained, to all intents and purposes, an impersonal God; and this tendency to deprive Him of all human characters continued among thinkers in the Church, especially those who were influenced by Neo-platonism and inclined to mystical views.

¹ *The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire*, p. 298.

² Many passages showing this tendency are quoted by McGiffert in the book referred to above, Lect. III, "The God of the Theologians."

³ McGiffert, *op. cit.*, pp. 85 ff.

There was, indeed, as Dr. Otto has well shown, a reason why the mystics, though non-rationalist, should exemplify this tendency.¹ The philosophers reached an impersonal conception of God by thinking of Him as the Absolute, in which all particular characters are transcended. The mystics pointed to a God who was to be reached not by processes of thought but by intuition and "adhesion" of the human to the Divine; whose nature could be in some measure apprehended by the soul, but was not to be comprehended by the understanding, and was therefore incapable of being expressed in words. The two streams meet and combine in Eckhart, who was both philosopher and mystic, and whose doctrine of the ultimate Godhead reached the extreme of agnosticism. "The end of all things is the hidden darkness of the eternal Godhead, unknown and never to be known."² But in his thought this unknown Fount of all reality gives rise in Itself to a revealed God: the "Father" eternally begets the "Son"; and so the personal God is made known to men in Christ. The sermons of Eckhart show impressively how impersonal and personal thoughts of God can be held together, by the same mind, without sense of contradiction.

THE MODERN APPROACH

Leaving these fragmentary glimpses at the history of Christian thoughts about God, I propose now to glance at the ways in which we may approach the question of Divine

¹ *The Idea of the Holy*, pp. 22 ff., 83 ff., etc. In an Appendix Otto quotes passages from Chrysostom insisting on the inconceivability of God against some Arians who on rationalist grounds were asserting the opposite. This example "shows that a 'negative theology' can and indeed must arise not only from [philosophy] but from purely and genuinely religious roots."

² Quoted by Rufus M. Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, p. 225. The whole chapter on Eckhart is illuminating. See also selections in *Light, Life and Love*, edited by Dr. W. R. Inge. Professor Julian Huxley has some suggestive remarks on three "aspects" of God in his *Essays of a Biologist*, pp. 262 ff.

Personality through Science, Philosophy, the study of Human Personality, and Religious Experience.

(a) *Science*.—The scientific study of the world, especially during the last century, has brought into sharper contrast personal and impersonal conceptions of God. The universe is found to be so vast and so complex that to imagine it as the work of a personal Creator stretches the idea of personality almost to breaking-point. And Science necessarily seeks to bring all happenings under the reign of natural law. She therefore (quite rightly) rejects the idea that events which cannot yet be “explained” as examples of the working of any known law must be attributed to the personal will of God. New discoveries are continually narrowing the field within which such events can be supposed to happen; and “people who take refuge in gaps find themselves in a tight place when the gaps begin to close.” The concept of Evolution, which we all now hold whether or not we can say exactly what it means, seems to banish the idea of a purely external Creator. “Creation,” if the word is used at all, must now be thought of as a continuing process—due to forces *in* the world and not outside it—like the development of a flower. The Power that has brought the world into being and sustains it is seen once more, as in the early days of Greek Christianity, to be *immanent* in the universe and not transcendent only. And some would say that the idea of immanence excludes that of personality; for to their minds a personal Creator is necessarily One outside the world, related to it as a man is related to a house that he is building or a machine that he is constructing. If a “personal” God can only mean One who acts on the world from the outside, breaking the sequence of natural laws by arbitrary incursions of His own will, then I think the scientific mind is bound to reject the belief. But perhaps it is the conception of personality that needs revision; and to this Psychology may have something to say, which we shall consider later.¹

¹ See below, pp. 77 ff.

(b) *Philosophy*.—I hesitate here, partly because of my own defective power of thought, and partly because of want of agreement among the experts. The old “proofs of the existence of God”—cosmological, ontological, teleological—are rarely now regarded as convincing, unless they are so restated as to be hardly recognizable. Few persons, I suppose, except Roman Catholics, now believe that the existence of a personal God can be intellectually demonstrated like a proposition in Geometry. I am myself, however, unable to see that any real refutation has been provided to the idealist argument that the condition of all knowledge is a supreme and universal Mind. Nothing is or can be known except in relation to Consciousness; and that which is the underlying condition of knowing anything cannot be a mere item among the facts that are to be known. A naturalistic or empiricist philosophy, that represents the human mind simply as a phenomenon among the phenomena that make up the world we know, seems to me therefore to be discredited at the outset.¹ We are all, of course, convinced that the existence of the real world is not dependent on our own consciousness or that of any other finite mind; we are all quite sure that the world existed before us and will continue after us. But this is not to say that the world can be conceived as self-existing. If we try so to conceive it we at once fall into contradiction: we are trying to think of a world which exists without our thinking of it. We can only really think of it as existing *for some mind*; and this appears to me to make the reality of a supreme and universal Mind, of which our finite minds are a partial and very imperfect expression, a necessity of thought. Acknowledgment of such a Mind seems to me as

¹ Referring to Mr. Bertrand Russell's assertion that “electrons and protons, like the soul, are logical fictions,” Canon Streeter says: “The reality to which the fiction ‘soul’ corresponds differs in one important respect from the reality to which the fictions ‘electron’ and ‘proton’ correspond. The ‘soul’ stands for an element in reality which can frame theories about electrons and protons.” (*Reality*, p. 18.)

much a pre-condition of knowledge as is the acknowledgment of our own consciousness.

If this is too "metaphysical" to carry conviction, a similar conclusion may, I believe, be reached in another way. There is the old Teleological argument, that from Design. We cannot, it is true, now apply that argument in detail as Paley did. We cannot say, for example, that the adaptation of the eye for seeing implies an intelligent Designer as much as does the adaptation of a watch for keeping time. For it is argued that "such adaptation must *necessarily* be found on every side in a world where the only chance of survival lay in responsiveness to environmental conditions."¹ According to a widely accepted theory, held in the main by Professor Julian Huxley,² adaptation is the result of small accidental variations of which the favourable ones are naturally selected and increased through long generations by heredity, the "fitter" individuals surviving and the less fit being weeded out. Many biologists are now inclined to question whether the variations that lead to progress are in fact accidental, but this we may consider later. Putting this question aside for the moment, and assuming that the appearance of detailed adaptation of means to ends does not necessarily point to a designing Mind, we have yet the fact that the world as a whole reveals itself to us not as a chaos but as an ordered Cosmos. It is not, as someone has said, like a sack of type emptied out on to the floor; the letters run together into words, the words into sentences which have a meaning. *The world makes sense*. This can only mean that there is Reason behind it, to which the reason in ourselves makes answer. In so far as the world appears to run by itself like a very complicated machine (and we shall see reasons for doubting whether this is a sufficient description of the

¹ McDowall, *Evolution and the Need for Atonement*, p. 5.

² "Progress in pre-human evolution is almost entirely the resultant of blind chance and blind necessity." (*Essays of a Biologist*, p. 39.)

world of living beings), it must yet be remembered that no machine known to man ever yet constructed itself. The more we study the complex adjustments of any machine of man's contriving, the more certain we are that it manifests a Purpose. And though the Purpose of the world as a whole may be beyond our discovery, we cannot really get away from the conviction that there is one. And if (as to me at least seems clear) the idea of an unconscious purpose is a contradiction in terms,¹ this can only mean that there is a conscious Mind or Reason behind the universe. "The simplest machine is the epitome and distillation of long-concentrated conscious purpose, linked with keen intelligence."²

Reflection on our *cognitive* experience of the world, therefore, seems to me to lead us definitely towards belief in a conscious Mind as the author of its rationality. But it tells us little or nothing about the *quality* of such Mind—whether, for example, It must be regarded as possessing the ethical quality of goodness. Other departments of philosophy may perhaps help us here. Reflection on our *æsthetic* experience may incline us towards the judgment that our power of appreciating Beauty in nature and art points to a similar element in the universal Mind; but I cannot here enter upon this question. I believe that a full analysis of our *ethical* experience—the distinction we make between personal acts and characters as morally good or evil, with the unique sense of obligation that impresses us whenever we ourselves are faced with a choice between the two—points indubitably to the presence in the world of a

¹ An animal or plant may, of course, be fulfilling a purpose of which it is *itself*, in all probability, not conscious at all. But, if there is purpose, there must be consciousness somewhere. "At least so far as our experience and our powers of conception extend, the existence of a Purpose implies a Mind commensurate with that purpose" (L. T. Hobhouse, *Development and Purpose*, p. 365).

² Streeter, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

supreme ethical Purpose: a drive towards goodness in the life of moral beings that implies more of conscious purpose in the whole than is suggested by Matthew Arnold's "stream of tendency, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness." Whittier writes:

By all that He requires of me
I know what God Himself must be;¹

and yet we must not hastily identify this *moral* purpose in the world with that to which we are led by reflection on "design" and rationality in nature. There is (on the surface of things at least) much to cause doubt whether this larger and less intelligible purpose is always *good*. The presence of Evil in the world, to consideration of which the later chapters of this book are devoted, prevents us from too easily asserting that the God of our moral experience is the same as the God of the universe. The philosophy of knowledge and the philosophy of conduct unite in drawing us to the acknowledgment of Purpose and therefore of Conscious Mind at the back of the world of experience; but we cannot yet say that philosophy is able to convince us of the goodness of God. And it is this that we are seeking to have established.

(c) *Psychology*.—The study of human personality is partly scientific and partly philosophical: scientific in so far as attention is directed to particular facts; philosophical when it leads us to reflect upon the nature of the mind that knows them and the implications of such knowledge. Perhaps psychology is as yet only in its infancy; but even so it would seem that enough light has been thrown on the nature of human personality to give some help in the endeavour to determine what Personality in God can rightly be held to mean. I will only suggest three points.

(1) It seems to be shown that personality in ourselves is

¹ Whittier, *Revelation*.

not something *given* as already complete, but something that must be striven for and achieved. We are not things, and we are not mere animals, but each one of us is a potential person. A Person may be briefly described as a being that is capable of forming a *purpose*: whose acts, that is, are determined not by external conditions only but (in part at least) by himself: who is able to conceive an ideal end, and to modify external conditions with a view to its realization. But this power is only gradually acquired, and it differs greatly from one "person" to another. With many of us, purposes are feeble and vacillating, liable to be obliterated from our minds by attractive objects, so that we are creatures of impulse and caprice, drawn this way and that by inconsistent and temporary inclinations. Such a being is only a person as it were in embryo; he has yet to make himself a man. In proportion as he is integrated or made whole by a supreme purpose in his life, to which passing desires are compelled to give way, does he achieve his own personality. Moreover, purposes are of very different quality; and the man whose character is formed by the pursuit of a purpose that benefits others than himself is more of a true person, because he responds more truly to his environment, than one whose purpose is centred in himself. If we carry this thought up beyond our human level, and ask what a perfect Person would be like, the only answer must be that the perfect Person would be One whose every act is guided by his whole purpose, never by mere whim and caprice; and, further, One whose whole purpose is absolutely good—concerned for all other conscious beings and not for Himself. But is not this, in essence, a brief description of the personality of Jesus, and of the Father of whom he taught? ¹

(2) But, it may be said, we are told that God is infinite, whereas every person known to us is a being of quite narrow

¹ Bishop Temple, *The Nature of Personality*, p. 79.

limitations, expressing himself in a physical body that is wholly separate from all others, occupies a small portion of space, and lasts only for a brief period of time. He is, moreover, a mind which appears to be impervious, except through bodily signs, to the minds of all other persons. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with its joys."¹

Yes, in the sea of life enisled,
With echoing straits between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
We mortal millions live *alone*.²

But, after all, it is only on a superficial view that rocky islands are thus divided one from another by "the unplumbed, salt, estranging sea." If we plunge deeper, we discern that they are but projections of the one solid earth. And the study of human personality proves to us that of our apparently sundered selves the severance is on the surface only. Each self-conscious person is much more than he appears to be, even to himself. Below the conscious stream of individual thought, known to the thinker only, there stretches to an unknown depth the region of the subconscious part of his personality, the extent and importance of which modern psychology is more and more revealing. In it is the store-house we call memory, and the seat of the character our habits have formed; it is there that the greater part of *what we are* resides; it is our subconscious self that mainly decides how we respond to new situations as they arise. The purpose of our life, if we have one, while it informs our conscious strivings, colours also all our subconscious being. Evil impulses as well as good, no doubt, arise from this region; yet it would seem that here is the place where any communion we have with God is mainly carried on; where

¹ Prov. xiv. 10.

² Matthew Arnold, *To Marguerite*.

"the Spirit intercedes in us with groanings"¹ that our conscious minds can hardly utter.²

In the light shed upon personality by the study of the subconscious, not only is each person seen to be greater than we had supposed, but the rigid separation of one person from another is partly broken down. In the subconscious region, more certainly than in the conscious, our apparently sundered personalities are found to blend and become "conjunct." Mind affects mind by "telepathy" in ways that at present we cannot explain, and the silent, even the subconscious, thoughts of one mind are read by another. In the phenomena of "mediumship" and automatic writing, when fraud is eliminated or never enters, there is abundant evidence, collected by the Society for Psychical Research and others, that the mind of the "medium," whether in the normal state or in a condition of trance, is able to read the thoughts of other persons—usually present but sometimes at a distance.³ This "psychic" endowment varies enormously from person to person, and perhaps the cultivation of the intellect sometimes tends to overlay it; but in measure it would seem to belong to man as man. If so, the separation of each individual from every other belongs to the surface appearance rather than to the deeper reality. Individuality is unshareable, but not so personality. There does appear to be evidence of *a common mind* of which persons may to

¹ Rom. viii. 26. The translation "in us" expresses the real meaning of the Greek word *ἐντρυχάμεν*; "for us" is omitted by the best MSS.

² Dr. Sanday, in his *Christologies Ancient and Modern*, with supplement *Personality in Christ and Ourselves*, endeavoured to apply the fact of the subconscious to the elucidation of the Divine Humanity of Christ. The suggestion appears to be well worth following up; but I preferred to make no use of it in the previous chapter, through the fear that I might fall into the fallacy of trying to "explain" the better known by the less known.

³ All who study the evidence must be convinced that *if* the facts do not conclusively prove the transmission of thoughts from disembodied minds, they can only be accounted for on the supposition of extensive "telepathic" influences proceeding from persons in the flesh.

some extent be sharers—especially when they have common interests or belong to the same group.¹

We need not, however, go to abnormal conditions of personality to find evidence of this—if only we have the clue. The mind of a true leader or teacher is impressed subconsciously on those who come under his influence; in a school or office the character of the head is (more or less) repeated in his subordinates. There is here, almost certainly, something more than imitation. The greatest part of the influence any of us can exert for good (or unhappily for evil) on those about us is wholly unknown to ourselves. There are persons whose entry into a room alters the whole spiritual atmosphere. One mind tends to repeat and express itself in others. Those who have had experience of a Quaker meeting for worship held “in the life” know that constantly there is clear evidence that even in the silence a common thought has been impressing itself on persons gathered in prayerful fellowship with one another.

(3) If Personality is thus to some extent shareable in ways that we cannot yet explain intellectually, does it not follow that the “mystic union” of the soul with God or Christ, of which the saints tell us, is not contrary to human nature, and may be a reality—perhaps the greatest of all realities within our reach? It also seems to follow that an immanent Divine Personality is not a contradiction in terms. Paul thought of God as immanent in Christ,² as immanent in Christians,³ possibly as immanent in the world.⁴ And yet he never let go his Jewish belief in God as a personal Being. Perhaps he was not so inconsistent here as Dr. McGiffert seems to think.⁵ We need not start out with the idea that

¹ Julian Huxley, *Essays of a Biologist*, p. 283.

² 2 Cor. v. 19.

³ 1 Cor. iii. 16.

⁴ Acts xvii. 28.

⁵ “Paul thought of deity not only as a personal being, but also as spiritual substance—as spiritual substance in which Christians may share as well as Christ. . . . The two independent and disparate conceptions of God lie side by side in Paul’s epistles.” (*Op. cit.*, p. 33.)

only an impersonal "substance" can be "shared." We can share a purpose and an inspiration, both of which are marks of personality. God may be truly personal, and yet to be "partakers of the Divine nature" may be the supreme object of our endeavour. Christ was a historical person, and yet he may become the very life of our lives, as he was for Paul—the best that each of us has in him to be.

(d) *Religious Experience*.—This leads us on to our next point, the testimony of religious experience to the personality of God. I have already mentioned the experience of the best of the Hebrews as showing how it is on thoughts of Divine personality that religion feeds. Yet at the same time we must, I think, recognize with Dr. Otto that there is in all religious experience, and pre-eminently in that of the mystic, or person of religious genius, an awareness of the Divine that transcends the concepts formed by the intellect.¹ In so far, therefore, as the word "person" stands for an intellectual concept, framed on the basis of things as they appear to the senses, it does not adequately represent what God is to the religious mind. If personality necessarily means human limitation, God is certainly felt to be *superpersonal*—though to this word we can attach no clear meaning. But we have already noted² not only that human personality is much greater than it appears, but that there is in all our knowledge of persons or other minds an element that is beyond the compass of the intellect: they are not mere "objects" to us as their bodies are, and we do not know them either by observation or by introspection. Knowledge of persons provides a real clue to knowledge of God. Our ascription of personality to Him is something more than metaphor or analogy. While it is no doubt part of the process whereby religious experience is "rationalized"

¹ Otto calls it "non-rational," but it is certainly not *irrational*; I should prefer to call it "non-intellectual."

² See above, p. 23.

in order that it may be thought and expressed in language, the category of "person" is the highest and least inadequate that can be employed. God is *at least* felt to be personal, however much more He may be.¹ It is in the *milieu* of personality that religious experience moves and has its being. Outside of it, such experiences as prayer, penitence, forgiveness, restoration, grace and guidance, wither for want of nutriment. In impersonal religions there may indeed be much of aspiration; but, if aspiration meets with no response like that of person to person, its persistence is precarious. How many really religious people would feel that their deepest spiritual needs were satisfied by such a God as Professor Alexander offers us—a God who is the universe pregnant with the quality of "deity" which it has not yet fully brought forth?

We are sure of one another's minds because we are social beings; but the social instinct is satisfied only by reciprocal actions on the part of others. There is no such reciprocal action from God. For though we speak, as we inevitably must, in human terms of God's response to us, there is no direct expression of that response except through our own feeling that devotion to God or worship carries with it its own satisfaction. The universe does not answer our prayers by overt external actions as our fellows respond to our approaches to them, but in the strength and sustainment which in its tendency to deity it gives to our minds.²

It is clear that Professor Alexander means by this something more substantial than the suggestion that we are to be fed by our own hunger and satisfied by our own thirst. He is certain that there *is* that in the constitution of the world which answers to and sustains our longings after God; but in general only, not (he thinks) in detail. The testimony of the religious consciousness of man would carry us further than this—to the belief that God is able and willing to respond in detail to our attempts to approach Him; that,

¹ Compare Streeter, *Reality*, pp. 138 ff.

² Alexander, *Space, Time and Deity*, Vol. II., pp. 380 ff.

indeed, it is He who first approaches us. Religious experience demands and requires a God who, at least in this sense, is personal; and we may well ask how it could have survived among men if the Reality with which it believes itself to be in communion "can raise no particular weight whatever, can help us with no private burden."¹

But, strong as is the witness of religious experience to an element in God which we must call personal, its full weight is incommunicable. None of us can convey to another his sense of God; the most that we can give is the assurance that, if he who has it not will seek diligently, he will find it. And this may be far from convincing; for how is he to know that our "sense of God" is not a product of self-suggestion? The argument from religious experience is indeed fundamental, for each one must find God for himself if he is to find Him effectually; yet it needs corroboration from reason, which is common to all. The two lines of approach—the intellectual which we can share with others, and the intuitive which we cannot consciously share—must be followed together, and each must support the other. On this point there is something like a consensus of judgment among recent writers on the knowledge of God.

Were the passion for God not already lit, no speculative contemplation or proof of the existence or attributes of a metaphysical God would make Him worshipful.²

The true case for Theism does not rest upon general philosophy alone, nor upon religious experience alone, but upon the coincidence and convergence of these two.³

Religion starts with the method of anthropomorphic intuition,

¹ William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 522. The criticism is directed against the "Absolute" of idealist philosophy, but it seems to apply also to the "deity" of the new realism. (See below, pp. 96 ff.) I think that Professor Julian Huxley unduly depreciates the validity of the testimony of religious experience here. (*Essays of a Biologist*, pp. 278 ff.)

² S. Alexander, *op. cit.*, pp. 342 ff.

³ Bishop Temple, *Christus Veritas*, p. 39.

but is compelled, on pain of degenerating into superstition, to check results so reached by reference to facts and laws of the purely scientific order.¹

(e) *The Revelation through Christ.*—The word Revelation implies the belief that knowledge of God is the result not alone of man's search for God but of His self-disclosure to man. It is therefore only in place where some thought of personality in God can find entrance into the mind; but it seems to play a part in all vital religion. "A God who is purely passive in the religious relation, who makes no approach to man, but like the Infinite Substance of Spinoza has to be explored, as one explores the properties of a gas or a triangle, is not the God of the Christian or of any other vital faith. . . . When the sense of a Divine approach fades, religion inevitably decays."² There is probably some sense of this Divine approach in all the higher religions, and it would be a mistake to confine the idea of Revelation to Christianity alone; though, as was said in the last chapter, confession of the Divine Humanity of Christ implies that he is in a very special way the Revealer of God. We may conjecture that all genuine religious experience is a two-sided fact: on the one side man seeking God, on the other God seeking man and endeavouring to make Himself known.

This way of regarding Revelation is however very different from that which has prevailed among "orthodox" theologians. They have generally regarded it as the supernatural imparting of information by God to man—contrasting it with such knowledge of the Divine as he could acquire by the use of his own faculties. The second has been called "natural," the first "revealed" religion. There are good reasons for doubting whether pure truth concerning Divine matters is, or ever can be, communicated to man, even in language that we rightly call "inspired." Religious doctrines,

¹ Streeter, *Reality*, p. 110. (Compare ch. ii., p. 53, above.)

² W. Morgan, *The Nature and Right of Religion*, p. 84.

as has to some extent been shown in preceding chapters, have been the work of the human intellect, striving to make clear, and to share with others, what through religious experience has been discerned of God. Any statement of doctrine *in words* can only have been formulated through the use of intellectual concepts—abstract diagrams, as we have seen, rather than living pictures of reality—and can never be regarded as conveying pure Divine truth. “However we are to conceive of revelation, the traditional conception of it as a system of supernaturally communicated and therefore authoritative information about Divine things has been discredited beyond the possibility of resuscitation.”¹

What we find as a fact in history is that higher and truer thoughts of God have come *to persons*, mainly through their own religious experience. We may take Hosea and Jeremiah as among the most conspicuous examples; but there seems to be difference in degree only, and not in kind, between revelation through prophets and saints in Israel and through others like Socrates and Plato. As with all spiritual realities, revelation can only be interpreted *from within*—from what we know in ourselves of inward enlightenment—as when for the first time the real meaning of a well-known passage in the Bible or elsewhere flashes on our minds. That which had been to us but a mere string of dead words is now alive and thrilling with significance: we begin to *feel* what the writer meant to say. Probably all revelation of higher truth is of this character: it comes through the inward enlightenment of individual persons. We shall look for revelation, then, not in formulated statements, but in persons and their religious experience; and the highest revelation will be found in the Person whose religious experience is most intense, profound, and wide-reaching. In Jesus Christ we see perfect devotion to the will of God² associated with the most serene

¹ W. Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

² For the grounds on which rests our assurance of the perfection of his character, see above, p. 40.

and absolute confidence in His Fatherly care and purpose. If we can trust the authenticity of the great "Q" passage of self-disclosure,¹ he felt that it was because he was perfectly as a child with his Father that the power was given him to reveal the Father to other men. In him the Divine and the human meet. If from one side he is man in perfect relation to God, from the other he is God expressing Himself, as completely as this is possible, in man.

It is therefore in Jesus Christ that we find complete assurance of the element in God that we are bound to speak of as personality. His function was not only, like other prophets, to bring men to God, but in a special and unique way to bring God to men. The ineradicable tendency, the unavoidable necessity, that man should picture God in his own image—arising from the demand of man's religious life for a God that he can approach, and who can and will approach him, as man has intercourse with man—has in him its legitimate and final satisfaction.

O Love, O Life, our faith and sight
 Thy presence maketh one.
 As, through transfigured clouds of light
 We trace the noonday sun,

So, to our mortal eyes subdued,
 Flesh-veiled, but not concealed,
 We know in Thee the fatherhood
 And heart of God revealed.²

While, then, as was said above, we are not to confine the thought of Revelation to that which Jesus brought to men—

¹ Matt. xi. 25-27=Luke x. 21 f. Some critics set aside this passage as an "erratic block" of Johannine teaching that has become embedded in the Synoptics. If it was not uttered by Jesus in the flesh, it can only be, I think, a prophetic utterance inspired by his living Spirit in the very early Church. In any case, it shows what first-century Christians had begun to think of Christ as the Revealer.

² Whittier, *Our Master*. Compare a fine passage in Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, p. 174, and W. Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

while with the Apostle we recognize that God has not "left Himself without witness"¹ in all human history—it seems that in a very special way He revealed Himself in Christ. And, in the history of the Hebrew race, we see the long process of preparation for this climax. Without such a spiritual preparation—of a seed-bed, as it were, in the hearts of a few for the sowing of the seed of the Gospel that it might later spread to all—it is impossible to see how that Divine seed could ever have taken root. At Athens, or Rome, or even Alexandria, it is more than doubtful whether Jesus could have made himself understood at all; as it was (humanly speaking) he only just succeeded. And it is as the record of this gradual process of revelation that the Bible is unique in human literature, and indispensable for the understanding of Christianity. The Bible is not the Revelation itself; it is a profound misfortune that it ever was called the "Word of God." The "Word of God" is *Christ*: it is in him, not in the Bible, that the substance of Revelation is to be found. Revelation is not in words, not even in such inspired and inspiring words as those which prophets and psalmists were led to use in recounting their experience of God; it comes to us through a personal life of perfect beauty, perfect fidelity to truth, perfect devotion to God and men. It is in Christ and nowhere else that redeeming Divine Love comes to final expression; it is through him alone that we are able to believe with full conviction that "God is love." His revelation of the Father culminates in the Cross, as the manifestation in time of God's eternal way of overcoming evil; and in the Resurrection, as the vindication, on the plane of history, of his intuition that the way of love and self-sacrifice is the way of victory.

In the previous chapter we saw reasons for believing that there is in God what, under the necessary limitations of

¹ Acts xiv. 17.

language, we can only speak of as a human side—self-limited in love and devotion, for the redemption of His world of human spirits. It is the Christian faith that this personal and human side of God was perfectly revealed to us in Jesus; that we are not wrong in thinking of God in terms of Christ. If we do so, we necessarily think of Him as personal. But there is another side, which doubtless has not been and could not be revealed in a human life. Philosophy has groped after the Infinite and Absolute; Science presents us with a universe that makes our imagination stagger at suggestions of the infinitely great and the infinitely little, and at the attempt to conceive a Mind that can comprehend and direct the whole; religious experience itself assures us of something in the Divine that is wholly beyond thought or language. The word “God,” as Eckhart long ago perceived, has to do duty for a Reality that is partly revealed but partly unrevealed. If many of our difficulties arise from this source, a clear sight of their origin and of their inevitability may bring us some relief. They affect, however, not only our theoretic but our practical lives, especially in relation to experiences such as those of Prayer and Providence, to some consideration of which we now turn.

SUMMARY

THE Christian view of the world regards all events as happening under the care and control of the Personal Will of God; but there is a grave conflict between such faith and the facts of life as they appear. Yet faith continually survives. In Jesus faith is seen at its highest level, and his followers have in measure shared it. A synthesis is not impossible between the scientific or impersonal view of events and the religious or personal. The intention of Prayer is not to change the Will of God but to make His purpose our own and allow it to operate through us. Through communion with God things happen in the world that without it would not have happened. This is the personal action of God in human experience. It must be regarded, not as interfering with natural law, but as permeating human history and directing it towards its consummation in the "Kingdom of God."

In the sphere of individual experience Providence is closely associated with Prayer and Guidance: it involves a certain moulding of circumstances (that is, mainly, of human wills) that the purpose of God may be worked out. The special place which Guidance has held in Quaker history is testimony to the reality of Divine action in human life.

CHAPTER IV

PRAYER AND PROVIDENCE

IF in "the Christian world-outlook" there is any vision of Reality, the events that happen in this universe of ours are not due to the working of blind chance, or irresistible fate, or mechanical necessity. Behind them all is discerned the Will of God, directing the stream of events towards the fulfilment of His purpose—a purpose which, though we cannot fully comprehend it, we can recognize as good. The only forces that can oppose or hinder this fulfilment are the wills of other intelligent beings, human or extra-human; and even such opposition may eventually be turned back upon itself and made to contribute to the working out of the Divine purpose.¹ This is, I hope, a rough but sufficiently accurate indication of the Christian outlook on the events of life. It involves belief in Providence, inasmuch as events are thought to work towards an ultimate end, and towards proximate ends, foreseen and intended by God; it also involves Prayer, as the principal means by which human beings are brought into co-operation with His purpose.

THE CONFLICT

When we think of God as so far like ourselves as to be possessed of Purpose, we think of Him as essentially Personal. And it is when we compare two things—first, our idea of how a Personal Will might be expected to show itself in events, and second, the way in which things actually happen in this world—that our belief in Divine Personality and

¹ This will be dealt with in later chapters of this book, in connection with the problem of evil.

Providence receives its hardest knocks. In the last chapter we glanced at this conflict in the history of the Hebrew people¹; but it is with us in full force to-day. It is a collision between ideas of God based respectively on Christian data and on our ordinary experience of the world. We have grown up, perhaps, in a faith which regards the relation of God to the world after the fashion of that of a good school-master to his school, a large-hearted employer to his business, or an enlightened ruler to his people. Our naïve expectation is that God will express Himself in the history of the world in the way that any of these would do in the smaller world of which he is the head. These little worlds are so organized that much of their ordinary business goes on without the personal intervention of the head; but his mind and purpose are at the back of the organization; and from time to time, when special circumstances require it, he comes forward with personal decisions that affect the life of the society or institution. He may take a personal interest in the progress and future careers of some at least of those who are under his care, be willing that they should consult him about their prospects, and gladly offer them his help. He would not be regarded as a good head if he shut himself behind impenetrable walls, if he never responded to any attempt to approach him, and gave no sign that any such person existed.

Yet it is on a rock like this that naïve belief in Divine Providence often goes to pieces. Many people, who have become capable of some intellectual criticism of their experience, find it presents just this kind of obstacle to their retaining belief in a personal God. God appears to them to be wholly "silent" and inactive. Their prayers might as well be addressed to empty space; the things that happen can nearly all be accounted for as the result of causes that are more or less known to Science; and the presumption is that

See above, pp. 66 ff.

if more were known account could be given of everything. They are not much impressed by what other people tell them of "remarkable providences" or "signal answers to prayer"—partly for the very reason that these occurrences, even if correctly reported, *are* "remarkable" and not ordinary. If God were what they have been taught, He might be expected to make His presence felt in such a way that no one could reasonably doubt it. It is here, perhaps more than anywhere else, that Christian belief seems to many people to fail in "truth"; for it does not commend itself to everyone, and apparently does not cohere with our ordinary experience of the world.¹ We have, for example, been through a great world-war, in which all laws, human and Divine, were set at defiance. Millions of young men were killed or mutilated; countless millions of shells were fired, and though of course they were aimed at something, only "chance" decided whom or what they struck. Whole populations were starved by blockades in which the innocent suffered more than the guilty. Armenians were massacred by the hundred thousand, and the hand of inhuman policy was not stayed. To-day the leading nations are diligently preparing for their own extermination by further war, and God seems to do nothing. Where is the faintest sign of any Fatherly care over the individual life—and, more than that, over humanity itself?

THE SURVIVAL OF FAITH

Attention was called above to the fact that the faith of the Hebrew people (thanks largely to that of leaders like Jeremiah and Ezekiel) rose above the inevitable disillusion that followed a clearer perception of the facts of life.² Through this survival it was able to help in bringing about the fulfilment of its own dreams (though such a fulfilment as the prophets themselves had never suspected): by preparing a

¹ See above, pp. 22 ff.

² See above, p. 63.

seed-bed in human hearts where the seed of the Gospel could take root and grow. The survival of faith, in the face of truth that seems to prove it folly, is itself one of the most significant facts of human history; it has been often repeated, and is repeating itself to-day. Thanks to Science, the nature of the world is better known to the present generation of civilized man than to any generation in the past; and, in spite of much perplexity, multitudes of intelligent men and women, who have faced and weighed these facts, yet believe in God, because they experience Him as the deepest factor in their lives. Like George Fox, they see "an ocean of darkness and death"; but, with him, they are also able to see, beyond it, "an ocean of light and love." If this is credulity, it looks as though such "credulity" might be indispensable for the salvation of the world from destruction.

In Jesus Christ—after allowing for imperfections in the records of evangelists who may have failed in part to understand his deepest thoughts—we see faith in God at its highest level; maintaining itself, as true faith does, by the practice of prayer and by reliance on His Fatherly care for men. Yet his faith was far removed from the blind credulity of the fanatic. He saw that the providence of God is "beyond justice," in that it does not, in this life at least, apportion happiness to supposed merit and suffering to demerit: the sun rises on the evil and the good, the rain descends on the just and on the unjust. He saw beyond the dogma, instilled into the minds of his people by inspired lawgivers and prophets from very early days, that disasters and calamities are "sent" by God in punishment for evil deeds¹: he knew

¹ Luke xiii. 1-5, John ix. 3. In the former passage "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" is probably a warning of the evil and futility of armed resistance to the tyranny of Rome. Threatenings of Divine punishment for the wicked, which are frequent in Matthew, are much less emphasized in Mark and Luke, and are either absent, or expressed as *consequences* of sin, in the fourth Gospel, whose author seems to have seen more deeply than the others into Jesus' meaning. (See Vol. I., *Christianity as Life*, pp. 46-51.)

that the laws of the universe work impartially, but that persistent wrong-doing brings inevitable nemesis. He found the action of his Father, not in strange and unaccountable happenings, but in the harmony of nature: in the beauty of the lilies and the feeding of the birds. He assured his followers that all that happens is known to God and is within the circle of His care and love. If a young sparrow falls from the nest, he did not say that God causes the accident, but that He knows and cares. In the familiar style of oriental hyperbole, he assured his disciples that the very hairs of their heads were all numbered. And this insistence on the providence of God was intended to lift them out of anxious care about the needs of the body, into such a spiritual life of care-free trust as he himself enjoyed. In large measure it was successful. He was able to lead some at least of his followers into an experience of God akin to his own: deeper, more intense, and more widely shared, than the similar experience which had been known by their psalmists and prophets.¹ And such experience has been that of multitudes of his "saints," often humble and obscure, down to the present time.

THE SYNTHESIS

Each of these views of God and His relation to the world—which for brevity we may call the scientific and the religious, or the impersonal and the personal—has obviously a basis in human experience. One of them seems to deny the validity of the conceptions of prayer and providence, and the other to affirm it. We may be tempted to cut the discussion short by a peremptory *either-or*—to demand that for the sake of intellectual honesty and clarity of thought we shall choose between them. Yet may not the truth be found, as often with these seeming contradictions, in a higher

¹ See p. 146 n.

synthesis?¹ Even if the reconciliation is at present beyond our reach, may not the task of faith be to wait for it, using meanwhile for purposes of life whatever in each view seems to be grounded in reality? Each view must take account of what is true in the other. On the one hand, our whole conduct of life, our very faith in God, depends on the conviction that the world is *orderly*, that it is not run by mere whim and caprice, that to reap the crop we desire we must sow the right seed and keep the ground clear of weeds. If a mixture of air and petrol vapour might or might not explode when a spark passes through it, we could have neither motor-cars nor aeroplanes. A world which is based on law must be impartial in its working; the rain must fall and the sun shine on saints and sinners alike. If men will make war, and the father of a family is killed in an air-raid, he may equally well be a bishop or a drunken tailor: the course of the bomb and the course of his life have no mutual relations. If an epidemic breaks out, it is not God who "sends" the calamity, but men who have been ignorant or careless about conditions of health. Any ideas of prayer or providence which imply that God has favourites, whom He can be persuaded to exempt from the natural consequences of their deeds, are condemned by the teaching of Jesus as much as by scientific knowledge. There is therefore much in the scientific or impersonal view of the matter which religion itself is bound to take to heart.

On the other hand, Christianity, whether as Life or as Truth, stands or falls with the actuality of intercourse between God and men. If Prayer is purely subjective, and its only good effect is to be compared to the strengthening of our muscles by the use of dumb-bells, then obviously as men find this out they will cease to pray: for no one can continue in communion with what he is convinced is only a figment of his own imagination. The fact that the prayer

¹ For an interesting application of Hegelian methods to some of these antinomies of the intellect, see a small book *Opposite Things*, by Miss M. Carta Sturge (Bristol, Burleigh Press, 1927).

habit has persisted in human history is strong evidence that it is a form of correspondence with Reality; for any faculty deprived of its natural environment, like the power of sight in fish that stray into dark caverns and remain there, is soon atrophied through want of use. The Christian belief that, in prayer, men enter into personal relations with God is therefore strongly based. By the use of prayer things happen in the history of the individual, and (through him) in the history of the world, which would not have happened had prayer not been practised. This does not mean that the God who responds to prayer must be thought of as a Person wholly "outside" ourselves, as we (perhaps wrongly) imagine other human beings to be. Rather, communion with a God who is immanent as well as transcendent may well be thought of in biological terms, as a connection like that between a branch and the vine on which it grows, which keeps the living sap in circulation through every twig. Prayer is the chief agency through which we seek, not to change the will of God, but to make His purpose our own, and allow it to operate through us. If our conception of Law in the universe is broad enough to include that of Purpose—if, that is, our position is in any sense Theistic—there is nothing in such use of prayer as Jesus made that need clash with it.

DIVINE ACTION IN HISTORY

Christianity (in common with Hebraic religion) involves the belief in a God who *does things* in the history of the world: who is neither an absentee like the God of the Deists, nor a pantheistic Absolute who does everything in general (including what is evil) but nothing in particular. The action of God in human history has been popularly conceived in terms of Miracle; but belief in Miracle is on the wane, at least in the old sense of interference with natural law. It involves a dualistic conception of the whole universe, a

separation between God and Nature, which the philosophical mind necessarily endeavours to transcend. And, besides, it errs religiously, by making God an occasional visitor to His world rather than an abiding and immanent Reality. We shall do well to avoid terms like "intrusion," "intervention," "interference," and to think rather, if we wish to conceive the relations between the Supernatural (or Spiritual) and the Natural, of the analogy presented by the influence of life on matter. As living plants, under the power of the sun, absorb, transform, and vitalize inorganic matter—as life expresses itself through matter that it has made organic—so God as Personal transforms and vitalizes Nature and expresses Himself through it.¹ His action in the world is that of permeation and direction rather than of interference, and is usually too subtle to be detected by intellectual scrutiny.² The religious mind discovers Him in the order of the starry heavens, in the glory of a sunset, in the beauty and joy of flowers and birds, in all that gives *value* to life; but it is in the sphere of intelligent and conscious personality that His transforming power is most clearly to be discerned. If (as we have seen reason to believe) there is a Divine response to individual and collective prayer—if through communion with God streams of moral power and inspiration flow into human hearts—the course of history is thereby affected. Things happen, as was said just now, that apart from such communion would not have happened; and assurance of this is of the essence of belief in Divine Personality. We must, indeed, be careful how we assert dogmatically that the hand of God is shown in particular events. If we think we discern His manifest providence in the defeat of the Spanish Armada, or the overthrow of Napoleon at Waterloo, we do

¹ See note on *Natural and Supernatural* above, p. 58, also p. 15.

² Even Hobbes (somewhere in *Leviathan*, but I have not the reference) speaks, apparently with sincerity, of "*the secret working of God, which men call good luck.*" (Quoted in *The Times*, art. on "Good Luck," May 14, 1927.)

well to remember also the murder of Abraham Lincoln at a crisis in the history of a great nation. We must not simply count the "hits" and ignore the "misses." It is wise for us to admit that God's purposes in general history are usually hidden behind a veil; but in the Godward striving of man's spirit the veil is in part withdrawn—as is suggested by the word "revelation." If the conjecture mentioned in the last chapter is justifiable,¹ that all religious experience is a two-sided fact, being in measure a self-disclosure on the part of God as well as a search for Him by men, then He has been actively at work whenever human souls have sought Him in sincerity and truth. From this as a starting-point we can go further, and find clearer evidences of His purposive action in the revelations that came to Hebrew prophets and psalmists, and still more in the life and character, the death and resurrection, of Jesus Christ. In him the personal and purposive action of God in the world is most completely manifested. Thus an assurance that God has been at work in all human history on its religious side by no means negatives, but rather supports, the Christian belief that in a very special manner He was at work in Jesus, and in the preparation of the world for the revelation brought by him.²

But God did not give Jesus Christ to His world "and then go away." That is a poor kind of faith which imagines that He acted in the past, in days that we read about in the Bible, but that He acts no longer. We cannot, indeed, believe with full conviction in His revelation to men of bygone times unless we know something by direct experience of His action in our own lives to-day. Christianity cannot maintain itself as "truth" if its belief in the living efficacy of prayer, and in God's providential care of the present world and of the events that are happening in it, is grounded in illusion. Perhaps enough has been said in justification of belief in prayer; and it is needless to labour further our discussion

¹ See above, p. 85.

² See above, p. 88.

of the "general" providence of God: the control and direction of the whole of human life in accordance with His consistent purpose to perfect humanity into what Jesus called the Kingdom of God.

PROVIDENCE AND GUIDANCE

But something more needs to be said concerning the belief that God's action is to be expected and traced not only on the large scale but on the small—in the detailed experience of the individual. One element in the Christian's experience of God, where this is more than elementary, is the consciousness of a purpose not only for the world but for himself individually—a particular place, Divinely appointed, which it is for him to discover, and a particular task which it is for him to perform. Something of this kind, indeed, is known by many who would not call themselves Christians, as it was by Socrates; there is probably no life of real worth to mankind which has not been in some degree at least inspired by what Mazzini used to call the sense of a "mission." In Christian experience especially there is frequently associated with this a consciousness of *Guidance*, whether through special monitions of a supernormal character, or through more ordinary channels such as the enlightening of the judgment to seize upon the facts that ought to influence it, and to give them their proper value.

Providence, from the more personal side, may be regarded as another aspect of such Guidance. Very few, I imagine, would expect special miracles to be worked on their behalf, and such expectation would be generally held to indicate an unbalanced mind. Some people, like Savanarola, have expected them and have been disappointed. But many Christians who are thoroughly sane would expect and pray for a certain moulding or shaping of circumstances—not to suit their own convenience or save them trouble, but that

obstacles which hinder the working out of God's purpose through them may be removed and the path of self-consecration cleared. Such obstacles must, in most cases, be due (directly or indirectly) to the wills of other persons; and this is (as we have seen) a region where it is not unreasonable to look for the helping hand of God, a field in which intercessory prayer is often found availing. We may be totally unable to conceive beforehand the means by which such shaping of circumstance can be accomplished; but in looking back over their past lives there are (I should hope) few real Christians who cannot thankfully acknowledge that they have, in spite of many failures of their own, been Divinely led: that at times a path has been made where they could see no way, and doors mysteriously opened that had seemed to be hopelessly shut. By reflecting on such experiences we gain assurance of Divine providence.¹

There are many "varieties of religious experience," and Christians of equal sincerity are not all led along identical paths. To some people Guidance with its accompanying Providence appears clear and manifest; to others it is a very "secret working," and is apprehended by faith rather than by "sight." But broadly the generalization holds that it is those who pray for it and expect it who receive it, whether in the form of the "earthquake" or the "still small voice." George Müller, a man of naïve and even childish faith, who dealt with God exactly as if He had been a benevolent employer with unlimited resources, found all the needs of his Bristol orphanages met, day after day and year after year, without appeals for human help—in absolute confidence that He who had called for the work to be done would supply

¹ "Nothing is more confirming to one's faith than the experience of coming up to a closed door in the exercise of what appears to be a call of duty, and then finding the door opened before you by invisible hands; nor is it much less satisfactory to find that when an erroneous judgment has been made the door is providentially shut in one's face. In many cases an open door will, by itself, have all the validity of a direct call." (J. Rendel Harris, *The Guiding Hand of God*, p. 79.)

the means to do it. I cannot myself doubt that he was right, that he found and followed the path in which he himself was called to walk; but I am equally convinced that this is not the way in which most Christians are led, and that if they tried it, in imitation of others, without a clear showing that it was right for them, it would not succeed. In certain cases of illness it may be right for some people to rely on "Divine healing" rather than on medical assistance; but we must beware of supposing that ordinary means of healing are undivine, and we may be guilty of presumption if we refuse them. If "God works in a mysterious way," He also works through means and agencies that we can more or less understand; and it is not for us to insist on the supernatural and refuse the natural.

Expectation of Divine Guidance and Providence has received special emphasis in the Society of Friends, whose records of experience are marked not only by a deep spirituality but by a sobriety and truthfulness that give them weight as testimonies to reality. It may be well to quote one or two examples, the number of which might be almost indefinitely increased.

Stephen Grellet (or Etienne de Grellet) was a French nobleman exiled from France after the revolution of 1789, who took up his residence in Long Island, U.S.A. From Voltairean scepticism he was converted, as a young man, almost wholly without human agency, to Quakerism of a markedly Evangelical type; and he was led into a wonderful ministerial and missionary career, during which he paid four visits to Europe, having interviews with many of the crowned heads and leading statesmen in the European countries. His memoir, based on a journal kept by himself, is from first to last a testimony to the reality of Divine Guidance and Providence, given in great humility and without a trace of fanaticism. During an outbreak of yellow fever in Philadelphia, where he went to nurse the sick, he was seized with

the disease, and was soon so nearly dead that a coffin for him was ordered, and he was even returned, among the daily deaths reported to the Board of Health, as a "French Quaker." This was in 1798, when he was twenty-four years of age.

During the whole of that sickness I continued entirely sensible, and whilst death seemed to be approaching, and I had turned myself on one side, the more easily, as I thought, to breathe my last, a secret but powerful language was proclaimed on this wise: "Thou shalt not die but live—thy work is not yet done." Then the corners of the earth, over seas and lands, were opened to me, where I should have to labour in the service of the Gospel of Christ. . . . I saw and felt that which cannot be written. Suffice it to say that from that very time the disorder subsided.

In a few days he was attending again upon the sick, for whom nurses were almost unprocurable; and, though his health was as yet "very slender," he was "about a week without undressing to go to bed." Shortly after this, when he was attending a Quaker meeting, but had not spoken to anyone of his late experience, a certain preacher, Arthur Howell, mentioned him by name as one whom God had raised up for a service "to the isles and nations afar off"; and this, as he remarks, "was a confirmation of the word of the Lord to me." In the next year, 1799, he heard that a Friend, John Hall, from England, was on his way to America for religious service, and it was impressed on his mind that he should offer to accompany this Friend. He prayed that if this was a right "concern" he might have clear evidence of it, and that if possible John Hall also should "see it himself, with clearness." It seems certain that the two had never met in the body.

John Hall arrived at New York early in the Tenth month. I visited him soon afterwards, when he took me aside and told me in

a solemn manner that I was the identical person that he had seen, whilst at sea, prepared of the Lord to be his companion in the service of the Gospel here.

These are two examples, out of multitudes that might be given, showing the kind of Guidance that was expected, and frequently experienced, by Quakers perhaps more than by most other Christians, in days gone by. I am far from suggesting that their "supernormal" quality is essential—that there is not Guidance, just as real, which comes along the common ways of life, and is apprehended, in the main, by the ordinary faculty of enlightened judgment. Definite "monitions" appear to be much less frequent to-day, even in the experience of persons who are equally devoted to the will of God. It may be that the cultivation of the mind, which Quakers of an earlier day dreaded lest it should interfere with the operations of the Spirit, has made us less susceptible to what are called "psychical" influences. What I wish to insist on is that, in whatever ways it is sought and found, the Guidance and Providence of God is for the true Christian an experience which is to be expected and laid hold of—not as something exceptional, but just as truly a part of his equipment for the service of God and men as is prayer itself. So far as it is experienced, it is bound up with that element in the Divine which we call Personality: it is the outcome of personal communion between God and men. Whether, or in what degree, the experience is mediated to us by secondary agencies, such as unseen ministering spirits, we may never know and need not anxiously inquire. What matters, for our present purpose, is that Christians who rise to their full privilege of assured communion with God need not be seriously troubled by scientific and philosophical difficulties about His Personality. These difficulties can be left for further light to dawn.

SUMMARY

DOES Evolutionary Science find a place for human Sin, and (with this) for Redemption? All Life involves a measure of *freedom*, of issues that are unpredictable. With the development of Conscious beings potential freedom is greatly increased. In the sub-human world whatever freedom there is may be lessened by Parasitic and other ways of securing life on easy terms; in this case Degeneration usually sets in. This may be analogous to the emergence of Sin in the life of conscious beings. In what sense Sin indicates a "fall." It injures not only the individual person but the race. It not only lessens man's freedom to choose the right, but vitiates his relations to his spiritual or personal environment, which is both human and Divine.

Redemption is only possible in the personal sphere. Its place in the New Testament and in Christian history. Love as the only power that can restore spiritual life and freedom to man. Experience of Redemption through Christ: the awakening of love in men by an adequate manifestation of the love of God. The power of the Cross.

CHAPTER V

EVOLUTION AND REDEMPTION

THE Christian religion is marked by a number of words—either peculiar to itself or used by it in a richer sense than elsewhere—which begin with the prefix *Re-*. Such are Repentance, Revelation, Renewal, Regeneration, Redemption; in addition to the great word Religion itself. This fact seems to suggest that there lies near the heart of Christianity the sense that in this world, and especially in the life of man, *something has gone wrong* and needs setting right; that there is, at least in part of the universe, a discord that waits to be brought back into harmony, a chaos that needs to be restored to order. Christianity assumes the presence of this discord, and offers to resolve it; it is, beyond all others, the religion of Redemption. It takes for granted the reality of Sin, as a partial thwarting and perverting of the Divine purpose: as a positive evil which needs a cure, and not as a mere weakness or imperfection, like that of a child or a bud, which will be outgrown in the natural process of development.

For such a thwarting of the Divine purpose the idea of Evolution, as it has often been stated, seems to find no place. The Evolutionist tends to look upon the world as a scene of *unbroken progress* from lower to higher forms, from the nebula up to man. He calls our attention to facts that indicate such progress, and to laws, partially discovered, which show to some extent how it has worked.¹ Man himself is declared, on strong evidence, to have been gradually developed from non-human ancestors, and to have slowly

¹ For a careful study of the facts that point to progress in the world, see the first chapter of *Essays of a Biologist*, by Professor Julian Huxley.

progressed from savagery to civilization. There is no room, in the scientific view of world history, for the story of Eden. If man's need of Redemption depends on the literal truth of that story—that our first parents were created perfect, and that the moral evil of the world is due to their fall into sin, the Evolutionist is bound to reject it as a figment of the imagination. Further, there can be no such thing as Sin unless man has some degree of *freedom* to choose his course of action. If all his actions are determined for him by circumstances, such as those of heredity and environment, over which as an individual he appears to have no control, then Sin is impossible. There may be evil men as well as good ones, just as some apples rot on the tree while others remain sound; but a bad man is no more the cause of his own badness than is a rotten apple. This is the logical outcome of a Determinist view of human life, such as some Evolutionists like Herbert Spencer have held, and which is professed to-day by many who reject Christianity. If that is really the way the world is made, then Christianity, as the religion of Redemption, is not true. It will not settle down into a coherent system with the rest of our knowledge. Its whole scheme moves in an unreal world.

Inquiry into the Truth of Christianity therefore demands some study of the nature of Evolution, so far as this is at present known, in order that we may be in a position to judge whether it really presents us with a spectacle of unbroken progress, and whether or not it finds a place for man's moral freedom. In this study we shall also inquire whether the reign of Natural Law, which any theory of Evolution assumes to prevail throughout the universe, means that every event is the necessary result of existing and pre-existing conditions, so that, given a complete knowledge of the facts, everything that can possibly happen could be predicted.

TWO ASPECTS OF EVOLUTION

(1) Of the evolution of the material universe, if we suppose that this existed for long ages before Life appeared, we have (of course) little certain knowledge. Any theories that can be framed about it can only be inferences, drawn from observation of the heavenly bodies, and from study of the constitution of matter. We may conjecture that a primeval fire-mist or gaseous nebula condensed into suns and planets, and we may conclude with strong probability that the atom, which was till recently supposed to be the ultimate unit of matter, is itself built up of protons and electrons that seem to be rather minute charges of electricity than strictly material particles. But all this is of the nature of reasonable inference rather than of knowledge properly so called. We cannot reduce it to observation or sense experience. The only point in the study of inorganic matter to which I wish to direct attention is the difference between Physical and Chemical relations. In Physics we study the movements, and the forces exerted by, masses of matter whether large or small; and here it would seem that every event is, necessarily and completely, the resultant of existing and pre-existing conditions: complete knowledge of these would provide the means of accurate prediction, as in the case of an eclipse of the sun. But directly we touch Chemistry something new emerges. When two elements, like hydrogen and oxygen, enter into chemical combination with each other, they produce a compound (in this case water vapour) whose properties are in no sense a resultant of the properties of the elements, and could not (so far as is yet known) be predicted at all. A new order of relations, not contained in the antecedents, manifests itself in the consequent. The laws of physics are not set aside: the mass of matter and the total of energy remain the same after combination as before; but they do not explain

the results. In chemical union a "higher" order of relations is *emergent*.

(2) With the appearance of Life, in the world of matter, begins the Evolution of which we may be said to have some knowledge. There are, I believe, no facts at present known which show conclusively that living matter can be developed out of that which is not alive. Even should the chemist succeed in producing living protoplasm in the laboratory, this would not prove that it can develop spontaneously, for it would be the work of a living mind. But we must beware of basing any doctrine of special creation on gaps in our knowledge; and it is safer to assume that there *may* have been continuous development from the inorganic to the organic. But, even if this were so, as soon as Life appears there is a very striking *emergence* of a new order of relations, not explainable by the laws of either physics or chemistry. The biologist is bound, no doubt, to do all he can to reduce the actions of living beings to "mechanism"—to prove, for example, that such actions do not alter the total of matter or energy in existence, and that they do not set aside the laws of chemical combination; and it is largely through this effort that physiological knowledge has been increased. And yet it remains certain that the simplest cell, so long as it is alive, can do things which neither physics nor chemistry can fully explain. An amoeba, for example, will take into itself solid particles that will serve it for food while rejecting others; and most living cells can build up from the food they absorb new combinations of greater complexity than non-living matter produces. As soon as the cells die these powers cease.¹ The attempt to give a "mechanistic" explanation of such powers has so far failed, and probably it is bound to fail. At present the only sound theory would seem to be that they are an inherent endowment of Life itself, whatever that may be.

¹ This appears to be admitted by Weismann (see Orr, *Sin as a Problem of To-day*, p. 205).

The process of building up these complex organic compounds is known by the general name of "anabolism." Its most striking example is the power by which cells containing chlorophyll can, under the influence of sunlight, separate carbon from oxygen in the carbonic dioxide gas which they take in from the air, and build up the carbon, along with the elements of water, into carbohydrates—providing thereby such stores of potential energy as we have in grass, the chief food of cattle, and in our wood and coal. In all living matter there seems to be some degree of anabolic power. The process, as Bergson has well shown, runs counter to the general course of inorganic matter (in which organic matter also to a large extent shares),¹ which is one of "dissipation" or "degradation" of energy. Apart from anabolism the trend of the universe, so far as our present knowledge enables us to judge, would be towards a dead level of uniform low or medium temperature, in which no work could be done, no activity would be possible. The main tendency of the world seems to be "katabolic," like a clock slowly running down; living matter, while sharing this tendency, is also "anabolic," and can (to some extent at least) wind it up.²

It seems clear therefore that, with the advent of Life upon the earth, a new order of relations, unpredictable in terms of physics or chemistry, *emerges*. In this new order of relations there is some degree of *freedom*, in the sense that what happens is not wholly determined by past and present conditions. It appears that the Life-impulse is free to push out in new directions. This is most conspicuously shown when a change of environment occurs, requiring that living creatures should respond in new ways if their life is to

¹ There is anabolism in our bodies as our food is digested and made into the substance of blood, flesh, and nerve tissue; katabolism as this is used up and turned into waste products.

² "While in physics and chemistry we see a tendency towards the extinction of life and activity, in biology we see a tendency towards more life and more activity." (Julian Huxley, *op. cit.*, p. 73.)

be maintained; and when the Life-impulse drives them to try a new environment. Most biologists would now, I think, agree¹ that the process of Natural Selection, as expounded by Darwin, would hardly account for such a successful change. Small variations, or fluctuations—of which the favourable ones were in the course of generations accentuated by the survival of the fittest—would be insufficient as a *vera causa*; for the process would have taken too much time. This applies to the creatures that first began to fly—whether the reptile-like vertebrates that became birds, or the mouse-like mammals that developed into bats. Only rapid changes of structure could enable them to adapt themselves to the new environment. In these cases, and many more,² things have happened that were not merely the necessary result of previous and existing conditions, and could hardly by any possibility have been foretold. The Life-impulse breaks out in new ways, impelling creatures to live dangerously in a new environment, and enabling them to adapt themselves to it. There certainly seems to be in it an element that we can only call Teleological or *purposive*—directing the energies of living things into new channels that are (to some extent at least) intended. This is no doubt Bergsonian, but I cannot see that Bergson's arguments have been successfully combated. He indeed warns us against "finalism," by which he means the idea that all events are mapped out beforehand in detail by some presiding Intelligence. This, he thinks, would only be Determinism in a new form—it would give no

¹ "The idea of sudden variation-activity under new conditions is now universally conceded." (McDowall, *Evolution and the Need of Atonement*, p. 13.)

² Such as plants like the cactus which have adapted themselves to conditions of extreme drought; birds like the penguin and the guillemot, and mammals like the whale and the sea-lion, which have successfully chosen to find their food in the sea, and so forth. In regard to "mutations" in plants transferred to a new environment, a writer on Evolution says: "The tendency to 'sport' or mutate is evidently increased by a sharp change in the environment, such as is to be obtained by transferring it from one climate to another" (*E.R.E.*, Vol. V., p. 622).

real place for freedom. While he demands Intelligence of some kind behind the scenes, his "Creative Evolution" is more like the work of an artist or poet, who has an ideal in his mind, but only finds out precisely and in detail how he is to express it by overcoming the difficulties of doing so.

MORAL FREEDOM

In all higher life, it would seem, there is some degree of freedom, within the bounds of which an immanent and directive Intelligence can (so to say) try new experiments towards definite ends. And the more active the Life-impulse, the more it pushes forward towards freedom. Three stages can be marked, though they are not successive, but overlap: the Vegetative, the Instinctive, and the Intelligent. The highest is reached when Intelligence becomes Conscious in the individual. When Conscious life appears, the Intelligence which has hitherto worked, as it were, behind the scenes comes forward, and expresses itself in the mind of the individual creature. A self-conscious being, or person, is one that can form a *purpose*: that is to say, one who can envisage an ideal end, and devise means of attaining it. We have here a further example of *emergence*:¹ a new order of relations

¹ Professor Lloyd Morgan, in his books *Emergent Evolution* and *Life, Mind and Spirit*, distinguishes two steps: first the emergence of the naïve or perceptual consciousness that the higher animals probably share with man, and second of the reflective or full self-consciousness which seems to belong to man alone. The latter is marked by the power to form concepts, and therefore to convey ideas by language. For simplicity I have treated the emergence of Consciousness as a single step upwards. No doubt if we are to be in earnest with our Evolutionary theory we must treat the development of Consciousness as continuous—which means that we must attribute some faint degree of consciousness (or sensibility) to every living cell, whether of animal or plant. The strict Monist is bound to go further, and assign some kind of "mental" aspect to every molecule and atom. It is well at this point to distinguish the scientific point of view from the philosophical. Science tries to trace the development of fully self-conscious persons from primitive living cells, and these from protons and electrons. Philosophy takes developed personality for what it is, and finds in it (as we have seen above, pp. 54 ff.)

arises when self-conscious beings come upon the stage of life—just as truly as when life comes upon the stage of inorganic matter. The bounds of freedom are greatly extended when a being appears who can live in “the realm of ends”: who can appraise such ends as worthy or unworthy, and choose which he will follow and which he will reject. So far as he exerts his freedom, his action is self-determining, and his thoughts and deeds can no more be explained as simply the necessary results of external causes like heredity and environment than the activities of a living cell can be explained on the basis of physics and chemistry.

PROGRESS NOT UNBROKEN

Rightly considered, therefore, I believe that Evolutionary science, helped out by philosophy, finds a place for the moral freedom that is a condition of the reality of Sin and of the possibility of Redemption. But does it point to a doctrine which makes Evolution an unbroken progress from lower to higher forms of relation; or does it reveal signs that an opposite process, one of “Devolution” or Degeneration, sometimes sets in? There can, I think, be no doubt about the answer.¹ We have, for example, the great fact of *Parasitism*: the tendency shown by some races, both of plants and animals, to choose an easier way of life than that of the normal struggle for existence. Instead of procuring and digesting their own food, parasites draw it at second-hand from the bodies of other organisms that have done the harder elements of the infinite and eternal, which transcend the purely empirical order recognized by Science. If we are at a loss to say at what point in the history of the race the human “soul” began, there is precisely the same difficulty in the history of each individual. The difficulty must not be allowed to prevent us from accepting the “soul” or person as what it really is, and recognizing its powers as what they actually are.

¹ Julian Huxley, *op. cit.*, p. 13: “It is indubitable that degeneration is widespread in evolution.” And Lloyd Morgan, *Emergent Evolution*, p. 13: “Disintegration or devolution, no less than integration with emergent evolution, has to be reckoned with in the history of natural systems.”

work. Parasitism is a matter of degree, but it appears that generally, in so far as an organic species adopts this easy mode of getting its living, it becomes subject to degeneration. "Corresponding to the degree of parasitism is the degeneration of the parasite. . . . The retrogression affects especially the nervous, sensory, muscular, and alimentary systems. The reproductive system is (on the other hand) often highly developed, and the multiplication very prolific."¹ An extreme case is that of the *Sacculina*, which, beginning life as a free-swimming crustacean, attaches itself to the inside of a crab—where it speedily loses its organs and becomes a stationary sac adhering to its host by root-like filaments through which it draws its ready-made food.² "Any new set of conditions occurring to an animal, which render its food and safety very easily attained, seem to lead as a rule to degeneration; just as an active healthy man sometimes degenerates when he becomes suddenly possessed of a fortune, or as Rome degenerated when possessed of the riches of the ancient world. The habit of parasitism clearly acts upon animal organization in this way. Let the parasitic life once be secured, and away go legs, jaws, eyes, and ears; the active, highly-gifted crab, insect or annelid may become a mere sac, absorbing nourishment and laying eggs."³

Parasitism is by no means the only example of conditions that tend to degeneration. In all living creatures there is a certain conflict between the "anabolic" and the "katabolic" tendencies: the former, which is truly characteristic of the Life-impulse, drives the organism to new adventures in living, with corresponding progress; while the latter, which living matter has in common with the inorganic, leads it on

¹ J. Arthur Thomson, art. "Parasitism" in *E.R.E.*, Vol. IX., p. 634.

² Henry Drummond, *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, pp. 341-345. Compare Julian Huxley, *op. cit.*, pp. 11, 12.

³ E. Ray Lankester, *Degeneration*, p. 33, quoted by Drummond, *op. cit.*, pp. 344 ff.

to an easier path, with eventual loss of faculty, degeneration and decay. Those races of animals that reached a high degree of organization and then died out (before man appeared on the scene) would seem to have been lost in this way. In them the katabolic tendency mastered the anabolic: they (as a race, and of course without full consciousness) "chose" an easier path, and consequently were replaced by other races that "chose" the harder way of progress. The huge saurian reptiles of Mesozoic times that left their eggs to turn into fossils on the sands of Mongolia, though endowed with enormous strength, were succeeded by feebler mammals which used a higher intelligence, and cared for their young.

THE EMERGENCE OF SIN

Such degeneration among plants or animals is not, of course, in any sense due to Sin. No individual of a parasitic race has had any power of conscious choice; whatever vestige of freedom it possessed has been well-nigh swamped by the automatism of hereditary tendencies; and to speak of the *race* as being "responsible" for the destiny it has incurred would be absurd. Sin only begins when reflective consciousness has emerged; when an individual can frame a purpose, choosing as his end an ideal object, and preferring one that he knows to be inferior to another. There may, indeed, be something more than an analogy between Parasitism and Sin. Possibly the latter is a manifestation, in the field of conscious personality, of the same tendency to choose an easy way of securing temporary adaptation to a part of the environment, which we have seen to prevail widely in the organic creation, and which is usually followed by degeneration.

This is, I suppose, the measure of truth contained in the doctrine, sometimes heard in the present day, that Sin is due to "man's animal ancestry." So stated the doctrine is crude

and misleading, for (as we have seen) animals that have not reached self-consciousness do not sin. Their actions are determined for them by conditions of heredity and environment over which as individuals they have no control. A young cuckoo, that heaves out of the nest of a meadow-pipit the rightful habitants, is a detestable creature, but it can do no other than it does. On the whole, the animal world fulfils the law of its being (whether or not that law seems to us always good), and its life is a harmony. All animals feed upon organic substances produced either by plants or by other animals; some of them on other animals actually alive. But this appears to be the law of their being; even the carnivorous habit is not attended by degeneration; it is not *unnatural*, as Sin in a real sense is. Speaking generally, animals in a state of nature do not eat food that would violently disagree with them, or devour so much as to suffer from indigestion.¹ Even their sexual instincts are regulated for them; being creatures of impulse and not of deliberation they do not, in gratifying their natural promptings, injure themselves.

The coming of self-conscious personality therefore involves the possibility of a "Fall," and the possibility has become an actuality. Shall we call it a "fall upwards?" Perhaps, if we remember the wise words of Sir Oliver Lodge, that man stepped upwards, but tripped over the step. The "fall" means that a larger freedom was open to the rational being than was possible to the animal, and that he misused it, thereby transgressing what he knew (however vaguely) to be the law of his nature, and turning (as the lower creation never did) the harmony of his being into discord. Because

¹ I have known cows die through eating wet clover, but they are not exactly in "a state of nature." I am informed by a competent biologist that the larvæ of certain insects are injured, in a rainy season, by eating wet food, and that this explains in part why such a season kills off many of these insects. But as a general statement what is said above appears to be correct.

he knew, he was responsible—worthy of blame in the judgment of others and at the bar of his own conscience.

All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned, everyone, to his own way—

is the verdict of every man's enlightened self-judgment. We knew there was a better, if a harder, way open to us; we knew something at least of what the law of our being demanded; but we chose not to follow it. That is the nature of Sin; in the true sense it is always "sin against light."¹

SIN AND THE HUMAN RACE

If this is so, it would seem that Sin in the strict sense of the word belongs to the individual and not to the race. There is no clear evidence of a race consciousness, or a race will, that can deliberately choose the lower path, as the individual person undoubtedly can and does. And yet Sin, like the parasitic habit, entails inevitable consequences, which affect the individual himself and others. Among the worst of these consequences is the injury done to the character of him who commits it. It partially blinds his inward eye to the beauty and attractiveness of the good, lessens his power of resistance to the solicitations of evil, limits his freedom by the automatism of habit. "The wages of sin is death"; it necessarily entails a measure of loss of inward life. Is this injury an "acquired character," and if so can it be inherited? So far as our present knowledge extends, it would seem that external characters acquired by individuals are not usually hereditary; but that, if the causes that produce new characters penetrate deeply enough into the organism to affect the germ-plasm, then such new characters may show themselves in the offspring.

¹ So F. R. Tennant, *The Concept of Sin*, passim.

The question therefore confronts us, whether the fact of Sin in a man, or in a man and woman, affects the bodily constitution, and that in such a way as to reach the germ-plasm and so to manifest itself in their offspring. Do the children of sinful parents come into the world in any degree handicapped for the moral struggle because of their parents' sins? In the nature of things it seems useless to look for any direct evidence that can supply a positive answer. We cannot put the matter to experiment, or observe the difference between the children of sinful and sinless parents. The only answer we can reach must be based on indirect evidence; it must be a judgment founded on insight into the facts of human life as a whole.¹ The apparently universal presence of Sin in the members of the human race, who have reached a knowledge of right and wrong, is difficult to account for unless they do come into the world with tendencies towards evil as well as towards good. All the beauties of childhood, which no one ever loved more than our Lord himself, cannot hide from us the fact that dispositions which appear to us evil manifest themselves in most children at a very early age. What inference can we rightly draw from this? Selfish and unkind propensities may be rightly traced to the animal nature, the instinct of self-preservation, which we all inherit; but such propensities do not in themselves constitute Sin. Sin does not begin until the mind is sufficiently developed to recognize the difference between right and wrong, and the self, or will, is sufficiently formed to control natural inclinations. If, when this stage is reached, the

¹ See Orr, *Sin as a Problem of To-Day*, ch. vii. and viii. The question of heredity appears to be ignored by Tennant in his book *The Concept of Sin*. Dr. Saleeby and others have shown strong reasons for believing that alcoholic excess in one parent (still more in both) may prejudicially affect the offspring: hence they call alcohol a "racial poison." But we cannot be sure that parental excess may not itself be due to an inherited strain—that a weakness had not already entered the germ-plasm. In other words, alcoholism may not be exactly an "acquired character."

person fails to control them, or sides with what he knows is wrong, then there is Sin.¹ Assuming that all persons fail in this way (in greater or less degree) we are asking whether such failure is attributable in any measure to parental or ancestral sin. The question is biological, but for reasons already given I do not see that scientific proof is possible. On general grounds, however, there is in my own mind no doubt that the answer is in the affirmative.

If this is a sound judgment, based on correct observation of, and valid inference from, the facts of life, it supplies the truth that seems to underlie the Church's dogma of "Original Sin." I can in no way accept this dogma as a true theory if it means that we can be held accountable for the sins of our ancestors. What I can believe is that our ancestors have transmitted to us a nature which is to some extent handicapped in the moral struggle which we all have to wage; a nature which has in some measure lost its freedom to choose the right. A strand of evil tendency has, if this belief represents the truth, been woven into the inmost fabric of our being. Our essential personality, including what we call our will, is partly disordered; and in consequence the history of our race is a discord and not a harmony. A racial tendency towards evil seems to provide a *vera causa* for the tragedy that human life presents, as a purely individual doctrine of Sin does not.²

¹ Tennant's insistence on this distinction between sin and the "materials of sin" is of great importance. The "materials of sin" (viz. inherited propensities and inclinations) are also the materials of the good life in so far as they are controlled, directed, and used by the person of good will.

² T. H. Huxley held that "the reality at the bottom of the doctrine of original sin is that human beings inherit from a long series of ancestors, human and semi-human and brutal, a tendency to self-assertion which had been the condition of victory in the struggle for existence" (*Evolution and Ethics*, p. 27). This is now a common view, but it seems psychologically inadequate. We want to know whether this tendency to self-assertion lessens or limits the freedom of the will to choose the good. Professor Galloway probes the question more deeply, but contents himself with pointing out that sin, when it has once appeared in a community, tends to "diffuse itself" through the social structure by creating

Yet I know of no real foundation for the dogma of "*total* human Depravity." Were man's freedom wholly lost, were his nature completely alienated from goodness, it is impossible to see how there could be any Redemption—how, in fact, there would be anything left to redeem. Before, however, we can deal with the possibility of Redemption, it is necessary to look at the fact of Sin from a different standpoint.

THE SPIRITUAL ENVIRONMENT

So far we have been studying the matter from the point of view of Biology, as the manifestation, in the sphere of personality, of a tendency akin to that which is spread widely throughout the organic creation, to follow the easier katabolic way against the true promptings of the Life-impulse, which drives in the direction of greater freedom. When this path is chosen by a rational and self-conscious being, who knows the higher way but refuses it, then his own life becomes a discord, and an evil strand begins to be woven into the fabric of his race. This is the biological interpretation of the "fall of man." It treats the environment to which man fails to adapt himself as if it were wholly expressible in biological terms.

But, as we have seen above, the study of human personality, which is philosophic as well as scientific, leads us to believe that there is at the heart of the universe (as Religion of course teaches us) an element of Personality which acts upon man, and into the image of which he is intended to grow. If there is Personality in God, then the deepest factor in man's total environment is not material but is of the nature of Spirit. There is a Spiritual Environment, *con-*
an environment that infects growing lives with evil before they have developed the capacity of resistance. (*Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 519 ff.) This is important, and gives us a large part of what we seem to require as a basis for a doctrine of Redemption.

sisting of two factors, to both of which man has to adapt himself. There is not only the universal Spirit from whom he has come and whose nature he in part shares; there are the other finite spiritual beings with whom he finds himself in relation. In the words of Jesus, the law of man's being is love to God and love to man. As life progresses, new factors of the total environment come into play. One of them was there, of course, all along, but (so to say) beyond reach.¹ Only when a spiritual or personal being is evolved can the organic creation begin to come into living touch with the Personal Spirit of the universe. At this point failure in adaptation to the real or total environment takes on a more than biological significance. Self-will separates a man alike from the unseen Spirit whose purpose is the law of his life, and from the other spiritual beings among whom he has to live. Sin involves not only discord in the soul and loss of freedom, but a breach of personal relations.²

REDEMPTION

From the biological standpoint there appears to be no escape from the degeneration that accompanies an easy life secured by a partial abandonment of the struggle for existence. A race of creatures once started on the parasitic way does not, so far as I know, turn back into the path of fuller life.³ But, even if it should be true that Nature knows of no Redemption, this is no proof that the same holds good in the personal sphere. With the advent of a

¹ So the human environment, which has perhaps been in existence for a million years, has only just begun to relate itself, and scarcely at all as yet, to the life present in the ocean depths.

² The thought of this and the succeeding section has been partly suggested by the first chapter of McDowall's book *Evolution and the Need of Atonement*, but I have treated it in my own way.

³ It may be objected that some insects, which in the larval stage appear to be to some extent parasitic, show no sign of degeneration in the perfect form. Perhaps the parasitism in this case is more apparent than real. (J. Arthur Thomson in *E.R.E.*, Vol. IX., p. 634.)

self-conscious personality that can respond to the Personality of God, a new order of relations emerges. Ethics and religion take the place of unconscious adaptation to environment. The question for us to consider is whether in this field of personal relations there is a remedy for Sin; whether the separation that self-will has brought between man and God and between man and man can be overcome; whether the breach can be healed, the discord be re-attuned to harmony. That, I take it, is the question of Redemption.

If there is a remedy, it is Religion that should provide it. Whether, or in what degree, other religions than the Christian supply the want it is beyond the scope of this work to inquire; but if the subject has here been approached on sound lines we shall not expect a presentation of Redemption in a religion such as Buddhism which does not recognize Personality in God. Our topic is "Christianity as Truth"; we are now asking whether Christianity, which is in any case pre-eminently the religion of Redemption, can be brought into coherence with the rest of our knowledge of the universe. As we have seen, it is not contradicted by the biological study of Evolution, for it deals with an emergent order of relations which transcends the scope of biology as much as biology itself transcends physics and chemistry. Perhaps it takes up the story at the point where biology is compelled to recognize its insufficiency, and gives us a glimpse of the great End towards which, it may be, the whole evolutionary process has been tending—the production of the perfect man.

REDEMPTION IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY

We shall do well to glance at the nature of the Christian Redemption, as it is outlined in the New Testament, and as the outline has been filled in by Christian experience. The main theme of the ministry of Jesus recorded in the Synoptic Gospels is the Kingdom of God—which in his

thought takes the shape of "a larger Family of men who recognize that God is their Father and that they are brothers of one another"¹; the keynote of whose life is struck by obedience to the double command of love to God and love to men. Our Lord's conception of the Kingdom is pre-vaillingly *inward*, in contrast with that held by most of his contemporaries, who were looking for national deliverance by a mighty act of God. Jesus teaches that the Kingdom is *salvation*, wrought by God, not by outward miracle, but in the hearts of men.² It is already here, in the experience of those who by repentance and childlike trust come into the place where Jesus is—the place of sonship with the Father, a life of love to God and men in which self, with its cares and fears, its legal ideas of merit and ill-desert, is lost in happy fellowship. The note of gladness and joy, which marked our Lord's proclamation of the Kingdom, as contrasted with Pharisaic legalism, and even with the righteousness demanded by the Baptist, is due to the fact that it was a message, not only of repentance and righteousness, but of salvation or redemption.

At the same time, no one ever had so deep a sense of the evil of sin as Jesus, and he knew that the redemption of men from sin was no easy task, for man or even for God Himself. He knew that Sin sets up a train of evil consequences—tending, unless it can be conquered, to final alienation from God and goodness. Perhaps it was this inevitable sequence of effect from cause that he had in mind when he spoke of unquenchable fire and outer darkness.³ Sin to him was like a terrible disease, and salvation the recovery of health or soundness. Yet it was not a disease that concerned man

¹ Vol. I., *Christianity as Life*, p. 46.

² For our present purpose it is not needful to distinguish between Redemption and Salvation—terms used to express the same fact of experience from rather different standpoints. I have ventured in this section to draw on an article which I contributed to the *Expository Times* (November 1927) on "The Meaning of Salvation."

³ Vol. I., *Christianity as Life*, p. 50.

alone; it was (as in the parable of the Prodigal Son) a breach of personal relations, an outrage on the Father's love. Hence the close connection of Salvation with the Forgiveness of Sins which Jesus offered—the healing of the breach, the restoration of fellowship. The disease of Sin, he suggests, is not like diseases of the body, which may come on a man through no fault of his own, and be cured while leaving him spiritually where he was before. It is a disease of the *will*, and can only be cured by a change in the man's inmost self. Such a change can never be brought about by force or coercion, and rarely even by fear of punishment. But he is sure that it is not beyond the Divine resources. When he declared that it was hard for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God, the disciples asked in amazement, "Then who can be saved?" And Jesus replied, "All things are possible with God."¹ Not, we may be sure, the forcing of a selfish will into unselfishness—impossible even for God Himself, for it would imply the abandonment of His purpose to develop free personality. It can only mean that God has in reserve a *motive* which can win the wills even of the hard and the unloving; and such a motive, he goes on to suggest, will be supplied through the giving up of his own life as "a ransom for many," the price of their deliverance. This self-sacrifice will be "the blood of the (new) covenant,"² which is to be established with the coming of the Kingdom—assuring men (whose minds were steeped in Jewish thought and practice) of acceptance and communion with God, purifying their hearts from sin, and giving them knowledge of Himself, as Jeremiah had foretold.³

It seems clear that our Lord identified the Messiah who should inaugurate the Kingdom with the Isaianic "Servant of Jehovah," who conquered only through suffering and death—who "gave his back to the smiters,"⁴ who was

¹ Mark x. 23-27, 35-45.

³ Jer. xxxi. 31-34.

² Mark xiv. 22-25.

⁴ Isa. l. 6.

"despised and rejected of men," whose "life was made an offering for sin"; but who yet should "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied," because through "bearing the sin of many" he had "made many righteous."¹ In making this identification he doubtless strained the Messianic conception almost to breaking-point; and yet his influence on his followers was such that in measure they understood and accepted it. While their minds were still held by the old idea of a conquering Messiah who should come in glory to avenge his people and slaughter their oppressors, they came to see that it was by choosing the rôle of the Servant, by the sacrifice of his own life for men, that their Master had won his resurrection glory and brought to the human race deliverance from sin. In the writings of Paul the idea of the Messianic Salvation deepens visibly as we pass from his earliest epistles to his latest. His inward experience of redemption through faith in Christ from the power of sin in himself (Rom. vii., viii.), which he interpreted as Christ living in him, pushed into the background of his mind the earlier conception of salvation as deliverance from the "wrath of God." And this is the note of the New Testament generally: the deliverance of men from sin is made far more prominent than their salvation from wrath or punishment. It is from "a vain manner of life" that they are "redeemed with precious blood"²: the blood of Christ is that which "shall cleanse their conscience from dead works to serve the living God."³ The great theme of the Gospel and first Epistle attributed to John is that of new *life* communicated to men who are willing to receive it.⁴

By Greek thinkers during the two centuries that followed

¹ Isa. liii.

² 1 Peter i. 18, 19.

³ Heb. ix. 14.

⁴ In this connection it is interesting to note that the Syriac word for "save" or "salvation" in the Peshitto version is one that means the giving of life. Perhaps this correctly represents the meaning of the Aramaic word that lay behind the "save" of the Gospels. (*Expository Times*, October 1927, p. 4.)

the writing of the New Testament documents, Christianity was largely Hellenized. The Greeks on the whole had not a deep sense of sin, and the personal and ethical aspect of Salvation fell into a secondary position. Its place was taken by a conception of the "deification" of man—the changing of his corrupt and perishable nature into the pure immortal substance of God Himself. This process came to be closely associated with the sacraments of the Church, especially Baptism. While Salvation was still connected with the death of Christ, no satisfactory doctrine of Atonement was worked out; the Christian mind for a thousand years was in the main content with the theory of Irenæus and Origen that the offering up of the life of Christ was a "ransom" paid by the Father to the Devil. Salvation was regarded as the deliverance of man from the control of demonic powers. Its main conditions were twofold: Baptism and correctness of belief.¹ The inward and ethical note, so strong in the New Testament, was partly lost; but it must be acknowledged that, speaking broadly, the idea and experience of Redemption holds a more prominent place in "orthodox" thought than in that which was ruled out as "heretical." Athanasius, for example, felt its necessity far more deeply than Arius, whose doctrine of the nature of Christ was almost wholly a matter of intellectual theory.

But it was Latin thought, not Greek, that in the main moulded the ideas about Redemption that have held sway in Western Christendom. The Latin thinkers, led by Tertullian and Augustine, had, in comparison with the Greeks, a poor opinion of philosophy, but a deeper sense of sin, a stronger ethical interest, and a more personal thought of God. It is to them chiefly that we owe the idea of God as Judge and Avenger, of man as under sentence of eternal damnation, and of the work of Christ as the placating, by

¹ Note the statement in the Athanasian Creed: "Let him therefore who would be saved think thus of the Trinity."

the sacrifice of his own life, of the Divine wrath. Such ideas of Redemption by substitutionary Atonement were deepened by the Reformers of the sixteenth century, and have persisted almost to our own day.¹

THE EXPERIENCE OF REDEMPTION

Behind all theories was the Christian experience of Redemption through Christ, which has preserved to the Church whatever life it had. While we need not rule out Matthew Arnold's assurance that every real religion has in some measure

cried to sunk, self-weary man,
*Thou must be born again,*²

it is yet a fact that from Paul's day to our own men and women have found in Christ as nowhere else the power to live a new life; and it is here, and not in theories about the Incarnation and the Atonement, that we find the real strength of Christianity. Let us try in conclusion to reach some glimpse of the nature of this experience. We shall look at it from the human standpoint, for we cannot see it from the Divine; and we must always beware of making our limited apprehension the measure of God's ways.

Who fathoms the eternal thought?
Who talks of scheme and plan?
The Lord is God; He needeth not
The poor device of man.³

With this necessary proviso, we may say that the "problem" of Redemption is to do what apparently Nature can never do—to overcome the consequences of Sin, both in the individual and in the race, without infringing man's moral freedom. A miracle wrought by Omnipotence could not do this, for it would contradict what we know of the Divine

¹ I have tried to give a popular view of the various doctrines of Atonement in a small book, *The Meaning of the Cross* (1921).

² Matthew Arnold, *Progress*. ³ Whittier, *The Eternal Goodness*

purpose, which is ever towards a larger freedom, a higher development of personality. No man can ever be coerced into goodness.¹ Warnings of punishment could not do it, for they leave man within the circle of self-interest, which is precisely that from which he needs to be delivered. What is needed is some influence on man's *will* that shall change it from self-seeking or self-interest (whether blind or "enlightened") to the pursuit of the Divine purpose; and shall start him on a new moral life in which he may develop his essential personality by adaptation to his spiritual environment—in right relations to God and men.

There is only one influence known to us which has this power, and that is Love. If a pure unselfish love can once take hold of a man, he may become a new creature—his will-power set free and strengthened, his personality indefinitely enlarged in depth and range. Many a man has been rescued from a life in danger of being wasted by the love of a pure and wholesome woman; some have found "conversion" through the integrating of their personality in other ways, as by finding some noble cause that has won their whole-hearted devotion. Our great literary artists have recognized this. We have, for example, Silas Marner in George Eliot's beautiful story—a man disillusioned and embittered against the world by injustice and misfortune, who is restored to his better self by the awakening of love for a motherless child that strays one evening into his lonely cottage. Men can be rescued from sin and despair and set going on the path of life if a great love can take possession of their inner being.

This is what Christianity offers, by its manifestation of a Divine love that can awaken a responsive love in men. The Christian Redemption can only operate as man's will responds to the love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. The awakening soul looks upon a personal life of unexampled

¹ This is the weakness of some doctrines of "Grace," from Augustine downwards. See Dr. J. Oman, *Grace and Personality*, *passim*.

strength, beauty, and devotion, which he learns to regard as the expression, within the limits of a human character, of the very being of God Himself—of that which lies deepest in the universe. As he rouses himself to the truth of the Incarnation, he finds in it no dogma to be passively received on authority, or coldly scrutinized by the intellect, but a revelation that goes to his very heart. He discovers One, who might have claimed equality with God, entering human history in lowly guise, taking his place beside us, sharing our burdens, “emptying himself” to help us; and the thought fills him with adoring gratitude. He follows the path of Jesus to the Cross, and finds that there are no depths of suffering and humiliation to which that Divine love will not stoop in its conflict with human sin; seeking victory not by force but by love to the uttermost. He goes on to the Resurrection, and gains from it the assurance that the victory was really won; that the way of the Cross was no delusion, but that the inmost heart of the universe supported and affirmed it—proving that God’s own way of conquering evil is that of gentleness and love.

And so the means whereby God works Redemption through Christ is the whole of what Christ was and did. Visibly, to the careful student of history, his coming into this world, his life of love, his obedience even to death, his victorious resurrection, changed the face of human life, bringing to men new possibilities of recovery from sin, of the development of the best that was in them, in happy fellowship with God and one another. But it is in the Cross that the Christian has always found the centre and climax of the revelation of Divine love. He gazes upon it until, like the pilgrim in Bunyan’s immortal story, he feels his burden roll away, and “says with a merry heart, ‘He hath given me rest by his sorrow, and life by his death.’ ” The Cross shows up to him, as nothing else can do, at once the depth and blackness of sin, the Divine holiness that is hurt by it, the

forgiving love that reaches down to lift man up, and the perfect human obedience that has been and can be rendered. It brings a blessed release from self, the heaviest burden a man can bear, because it turns his eyes from himself to Another. It opens up for him new possibilities of genuine humility and forgiveness—essential powers if men are to live happily together—because he can now forget himself in love. Thus the Christian Redemption is indeed a Gospel, if accepted in faith and love it can do what is impossible for Nature, and what man by his own unaided efforts can never accomplish: it can bring release from Sin with its fatal handicap, and fellowship with God and man.

The Christian Redemption begins with the salvation of the individual from the life of sin into the life of God, but it broadens out into a Gospel that can refashion the corporate life of men. This will be considered in a later chapter. We need not, as already suggested, disparage it on the ground that something of the kind was known among men before Christ appeared, and has no doubt been experienced in human societies where Christ is unknown. For, as the first Christians soon recognized, Christ did not begin to be when he was born in Palestine. The "Logos" had always been with men; God had not left Himself without witness in their hearts. "In his love and in His pity He redeemed them, and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old."¹ Christian thoughts about the Spirit of God will occupy our attention in the next chapter. Meanwhile we may note that the essence of the Christian Redemption has been expressed for all time in these words of Paul, drawn from his own intense experience:

I have been crucified with Christ, yet I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me.²

¹ Isa. lxiii. 9.

² Gal. ii. 20.

SUMMARY

AMBIGUITY in the use of the word "Spirit" is not inconsistent with its representing the greatest of all realities—that of the Divine in man. In the Old Testament "the Spirit" is God putting forth exceptional energy, usually in men, and specially in prophecy. By the prophets the conception was moralized, but never personalized. In the Synoptic Gospels and in part of the Acts the old conception holds, but after Pentecost more personal terms begin to be used: the Holy Spirit being felt, rather than clearly conceived, as the Spirit of Christ himself. This virtual identification is fundamental in the Pauline and Johannine thought. Paul extended the work of the Spirit to the whole moral life of the Christian; but its operation in mankind at large receives little recognition in the New Testament.

In post-Apostolic thought attention was mainly directed to the Logos and the Incarnation, and the Spirit was neglected. Trinitarian speculation largely ignored, and even tended to hinder, actual experience of inspiration.

But Christianity remains essentially the Religion of the Spirit. The term "Holy Spirit" may well be used as a name for the living Spirit of Christ in believers and in the Church; and "the Spirit" (with a wider application) for the Divine inspiring cause of progress in human life. In both senses it may be held to be the Spirit of Christ.

CHAPTER VI

THE SPIRIT

AMONG the characteristic words of the Christian religion is "Spirit," with the adjective "spiritual" formed from it. These two words have been employed by Christians almost from the first, and the noun was in use among the Hebrews before them.¹ Undoubtedly "the Spirit" stands for something essential in Christianity, without which it would not be the kind of religion it is; and "spiritual" is a term we cannot dispense with if we wish to describe its true nature. And yet, though we must employ these words, there has always been much variation in their use, and consequent uncertainty as to their meaning. Sometimes the word "spirit" stands quite clearly for an abstraction—a disposition of men's minds, as in the Western text of Luke ix. 55: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of"; sometimes it has a concrete and even personal reference, as when "the Spirit" in the Acts tells the Apostles what they are to do or not to do (Acts xvi. 6, etc.). In the writings of Paul passages frequently occur in which no one can say positively whether the word "Spirit" should or should not be spelt with a capital S; whether it stands for the Spirit of God, or the spirit of man, or both. This is particularly noticeable when he has occasion, as in the letter to the Galatians, to contrast "the spirit" with "the flesh."² Need we put this down to carelessness or

¹ The word "spiritual" is not found in the Old Testament (R.V.). The nearest approach is in Hos. ix. 7, "the man of the spirit" (A.V. "spiritual man"), where it obviously refers to prophetic inspiration.

² For example, Gal. v. 17: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh." Here the Revisers have used the capital S. In Rom. viii. 15, Paul speaks of "the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father"; in the parallel passage, Gal. iv. 6, it is "the Spirit of his Son, crying, Abba, Father." Clearly the word represents the same

confusion of thought? Perhaps it arises rather from the fact that there are regions of experience in which precise logical distinctions fail, and in which, therefore, the terms used are incapable of exact definition. In all religious experience, Dr. Otto suggests, there is an element of the "numinous" which transcends conceptual thought and therefore exact language. Especially would this seem to be the case in that deep place where the Divine and the human meet and blend. The fact that it has proved so difficult to use the word "spirit" with a clear and consistent meaning must not lead us to suppose that it does not represent a Reality, or that the experience suggested by it is not vitally important.

The Greek Christians of the fourth century found this apparent confusion in the language habitually used by their fellow believers; and, with their passion for intellectual definition, strove to think out what "the Spirit" meant. They eventually reached the conclusion that God was a Trinity of three "Persons,"¹ while yet a Unity; and the Spirit was the third of these "Persons." How far the Christian experience, which lay behind these thinkers and is enshrined in the New Testament, justified or required this rationalization, we shall be considering later. Meanwhile it will be enough to point out that such attempts at rationalizing the language of experience are always attended with danger. The risk is that the experience may easily be lost in the process, and abstractions be made to take the place of realities. Undoubtedly that danger is present here—as any one may easily convince himself by trying to substitute "the

thought in both cases; yet in the first it looks like a human quality received from God, and in the second a personal Being sent by Him. The ambiguity may be very important, as for instance in a passage in Mr. C. G. Montefiore's great book on *The Synoptic Gospels* (Second Edition, Vol. I., p. lvi.): "The spirit of Jesus continued to live in the community which his life and death brought into being." To quote this sentence with a capital S would wholly misrepresent the author's meaning.

¹ Properly *Hypostases*, or modes of substantial being. This word was very unfortunately translated into Latin by the word *persona* (see pp. 52, 164 ff.).

third Person of the Trinity" for "the Spirit" in many of the Pauline passages alluded to above. Even when it is clear that Paul in using the word had his mind directed to the Divine rather than to the human side, we shall miss much of the significance of what he writes if we think of "the Spirit" as something, or some Person, altogether distinct from man.

The average uninstructed Christian has, I am afraid, the very haziest notion of what "the Spirit" really means. This is partly due to the unfortunate retention by the Revisers of the term "Holy Ghost," which to the modern mind suggests some sort of Divine phantom, and nothing that an ordinary person can be expected to experience or understand. If the Greek phrase could be translated by *Holy Enthusiasm*, we should get nearer to its meaning—provided we remember the derivation of "enthusiasm" from *en* and *theos*, God experienced within. It is certain that in the earliest Christian writings "the Spirit" means an element of the Divine *in man* and not apart from man—an experience and not a mere intellectual concept. And this is in accord with the previous use of the word in Hebrew and Jewish history, at which it may be well to glance.

THE SPIRIT IN THE BIBLE

In the Old Testament "the Spirit of God" is a Divine *energy*, unseen but powerful, like the wind—the Hebrew word for "wind" and "spirit" (*ruach*) being the same. It is God putting forth His invisible power, and usually in men. Only in two or three passages, I believe, is it associated with creative energy *in nature*, and these are probably late, having been written after the Exile, when some degree of philosophical thought had begun to occupy the Jewish mind.¹

¹ Gen. i. 2, "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (priestly document, post-exilic); Psa. civ. 30, "Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created"; Job xxvi. 13, "By his Spirit the heavens are garnished."

The Spirit is, almost always, thought of as some striking and exceptional activity of God, experienced in human life. At first it is quite non-moral: it is what gives marvellous skill to Bezalel, the artificer of the tabernacle (Ex. xxxi. 3), power of leadership to Gideon and Jephthah (Judg. vi. 34, xi. 29), and superhuman strength to Samson (Judg. xiv. 6, etc.). It comes mightily on David after Samuel has anointed him for the kingship (1 Sam. xvi. 13). Specially, it was regarded as the source of prophetic inspiration in the more frenzied or ecstatic form which this took in early days—inspiring Balaam (Num. xxiv. 2), and Saul when he came into the company of a band of prophets (1 Sam. x. 10).¹ But the idea was not yet moralized. It did not shock the early Hebrew mind to think that the madness of Saul should be caused by an *evil* spirit from Yahweh (1 Sam. xvi. 14), nor that God should be said to have sent forth a *lying* spirit to deceive prophets who professed to speak in His name (1 Kings xxii. 20-23). Yet, though “spirits” might be evil as well as good, they were not regarded as mere irresponsible demons, but as under the control of Yahweh.

The chief work of the great prophets was to moralize the thought of God, and along with this, of His Spirit. In Isa. xi. there is a picture of the Messianic king on whom should rest “the spirit of Yahweh: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and might, of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.” In a later passage² “the spirit of the Lord God has anointed” the prophet “to preach good tidings to the meek”—a prophecy which our Lord applied to himself. Still later³ the waywardness of the Hebrew nation is spoken of as “grieving the *holy* spirit

¹ It is noteworthy that the greater prophets, except Ezekiel, scarcely ever attribute their inspiration to the Spirit: their main concern being to moralize the idea of God. “They have ceased to assume that God reveals Himself only in what is strange and exceptional” (E. F. Scott, *The Spirit in the New Testament*, p. 30).

² Isa. lxi. 1.

³ Isa. lxiii. 10, 11.

of God," and this word "holy" is also used in Psalm li.:

Cast me not away from thy presence (or face),
And take not thy holy spirit from me.

The parallel between the "presence" or "face" of Yahweh and His "spirit" appears also in Psalm cxxxix.:

Whither shall I go from thy spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

This is undoubtedly late, and has been supposed to indicate that the psalmist was under the influence of other than Hebrew thought. But it is not that the Spirit is regarded as the medium (so to say) wherein God is omnipresent. The following verses¹ show that this psalmist believes that God Himself is everywhere, and where He is, there is His Spirit.

The Hebrew thought of God was intensely personal, but the conception of the Spirit in the Old Testament is never personal. While the term is used to represent God in action (especially in men) it would often be impossible to substitute for the word "Spirit" the word "God." There is a perceptible difference. The Spirit is an *influence* that comes from God, and is often conceived in semi-physical terms as if it were an etherial fluid that could be "poured out" like anointing oil, or like water on dry ground (Isa. xlv. 3). The most remarkable passage in which this figure is used is the prophecy in Joel (ii. 28 f.) of the day in which God will "pour out his spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." The prophet foresees a time when the gift of the Spirit will no longer be confined to a few chosen leaders, but will be granted to all the people, even the humblest. This prophecy is perhaps the high-water

¹ Psa. cxxxix. 8-10. See E. F. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 42; and an article by Prin. H. Wheeler Robinson in *Expository Times*, October 1927, p. 6.

mark of the conception of the Spirit in the Old Testament, and we know how the first Christians believed that in their experience it was fulfilled.

In passing to the New Testament, we find that at first the familiar conception of the Spirit still holds the Jewish mind. Of the Synoptic evangelists, Luke especially is fond of attributing the prophetic activity of John the Baptist and other remarkable persons to the Holy Spirit.¹ Both Matthew and Luke ascribe to the Holy Spirit the miraculous conception of Jesus; and all three evangelists speak of his wonderful experience after baptism as the descent of the Spirit upon him. It is the Spirit that "drives him forth" into the wilderness for his temptation (Mark i. 12); and in "the power of the Spirit" that he begins his ministry in Galilee (Luke iv. 14). After the early days the presence of the Spirit in him is rarely mentioned; rather it is taken for granted. And it is remarkable that in the teaching attributed to Jesus by the Synoptists the Spirit has hardly any place.² Was this because he felt the presence and power of God so near and constant, for himself and potentially for all men, that he could not think of it as manifested in exceptional or sporadic ways, and felt no need of any impersonal agency to account for it? "The only incontestable reference to the Spirit in the Synoptic teaching" is believed by Dr. E. F. Scott to be the great and difficult saying about blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.³ This (according to Mark's version, which is the clearest of the three) was almost forced from Jesus by the allegation of some scribes that he was casting out devils by Satanic power. He asserts that they who said this must have known in their consciences that such works of healing were

¹ Luke i. 15, 41, 67, ii. 25, etc.

² E. F. Scott, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-80. In Matt. xii. 28 Jesus claims that by the Spirit of God he casts out demons. In the parallel, Luke xi. 20, the expression is the *finger* of God, and this is more likely to have been original.

³ Mark iii. 28-30 (and preceding verses); Matt. xii. 31 f.; Luke xii. 10.

good and not evil, and that therefore they were due to the agency of God and not of Beelzebub. The allegation was a deliberate calling of good evil, and was "blasphemy" against the witness of God's Spirit in the heart—a sin unforgivable while such an attitude lasted. The warning is not only heart-searching but of critical importance, as one of the very few passages in the New Testament where the light of God's Spirit in the souls of *all* men seems to be clearly taught.

The Acts of the Apostles begins by speaking of the Spirit in the manner of the Synoptics. It is through the Holy Spirit that Jesus has instructed his Apostles (i. 2); it is for endowment with the Spirit's power that they are to wait at Jerusalem.¹ The great "revival" that comes upon them at Pentecost, with the gift of tongues and other supernormal phenomena, is claimed by Peter as the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy of the New Age, when the Spirit should no longer be the exceptional prerogative of a few, but shared by all believers. After this a noteworthy change is found in the way the writer of the Acts speaks of the Spirit. At times the old impersonal language is still retained. Stephen is "full of the Holy Spirit";² it "falls upon" Samaritans, upon Cornelius and his friends, and "comes upon" certain disciples at Ephesus;³ it acts like a demonic power in "catching away" Philip.⁴ But elsewhere a more personal note begins for the first time to be heard. The Spirit is spoken of as having a mind and will of its own. Ananias and Sapphira are charged with "deceiving" and "tempting" the Spirit.⁵ The Spirit "speaks" to Philip and to Peter;⁶ it directs the Church at Antioch (probably through the mouth of some prophet) to "separate Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called

¹ In Luke xxiv. 49 and Acts i. 4 f., "the promise of the Father" is explicitly interpreted to mean the Pentecostal experience. Perhaps it is likely that what the disciples expected was the return of their Master in Messianic power (see Vol. I., *Christianity as Life*, p. 79).

² Acts vi. 5, 10, vii. 55.

³ Acts viii. 16 f., x. 44 f., xix. 6.

⁴ Acts viii. 39.

⁵ Acts v. 3, 9.

⁶ Acts viii. 29, x. 19.

them.”¹ “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us,” says the Church at Jerusalem, to send a message to the Gentile believers, freeing them from the burden of the Mosaic law.² The Spirit “forbids” Paul and Silas “to speak the word in Asia.”³ It warns Paul, through the prophet Agabus, of the danger of going to Jerusalem—a warning which he feels it right to disregard.⁴

If we seek the source of this personal note, we shall find the answer in the fact that the disciples of Jesus believed, especially after Pentecost, that *he himself* was with them, enlightening, inspiring, and empowering them for action. Peter attributes the power, by which he and John had healed a cripple at the temple, not to the Spirit but to the “name” of God’s “Servant” Jesus.⁵ It is the risen Jesus who appears to Saul (or Paul) near Damascus and effects the great conversion; and “the Lord” (that is, Jesus) who directs the disciple Ananias to help him there,⁶ and who later on appears to Paul to encourage him when in danger of his life at Jerusalem.⁷ There is no sign that these early Christians imagined there were *two* Divine agents of guidance and inspiration. The unity of the Divine Guide appears in Acts xvi., where it is said of Paul and Silas that when “they assayed to go into Bithynia, *the Spirit of Jesus* suffered them not.”⁸ The Spirit is personal, because it is now felt to be the living Spirit of Jesus himself—no longer a vague effluence or occasional energy from God, but an abiding Friend and Counsellor. It would prevent some needless difficulties and ambiguities if the phrase “the Holy Spirit” were always used in this personal and Christian sense.

In Paul’s letters this abiding presence of Christ, or the Holy Spirit, not only with, but *within*, the true follower of Jesus, is the centre of his whole thought. Perhaps his greatest contribution to Christian thinking is the fact that he makes

¹ Acts xiii. 2.

⁴ Acts xxi. 10-14.

⁷ Acts xxiii. 11.

² Acts xv. 28.

⁵ Acts iii. 13-16.

⁸ Acts xvi. 7 (R.V.).

³ Acts xvi. 6.

⁶ Acts ix. 10-16.

life in the Spirit cover the whole of the Christian's activities: inspiration is nothing strange or rare, but is to be the constant and normal experience of every redeemed disciple. While for Paul the Spirit still inspires to prophecy (i.e. to preaching), and occasionally to "speaking with tongues," its real "fruit" is the Christlike life of "love, joy, peace, gentleness, and self-control."¹ It is probably almost in spite of himself that he identifies the Spirit with the living Christ—as he does explicitly in 2 Cor. iii. 17 f., "the Lord, the Spirit." The identification, though clearly suggested by Christian experience, was not easy to Jewish thought. The ordinary Christian had been taught that Jesus had *gone away* to heaven, whence (at some time in the near future) he was expected to return in glory. He was believed to be the Messiah; and, though the Messiah was to be "anointed" with the Spirit, there was no tradition that he would *be* the Spirit incarnate in a man. Hence for most Christians to think clearly and steadily of the Spirit as one with the risen and exalted Jesus was very difficult. Experience favoured, but traditional ways of thought hindered, the identification.²

Paul's was the supreme genius among the followers of Jesus that rose to the thought of the Christian's whole life as being the life of the Spirit in him—and yet *his own* life, as that which he was meant to live: in modern terms, as the true development of his own personality. Redemption, for him, is the change of "the flesh" into "the spirit"—carrying with it, not an ascetic repression of the body with its instincts and passions, but their sublimation into the higher life, so that they become "instruments of righteousness" instead of instruments of sin.³ When the Holy Spirit is allowed to live its own life in a man it transforms him into the character of Christ—who, if he is the "image of God," is also the "image" of the perfect man.⁴ If this is mystical, it is also modern,

¹ Gal. v. 22.

³ Rom. vi. 12-14.

² See further, pp. 147, 153.

⁴ 2 Cor. iv. 4, iii. 18; Rom. viii. 29.

psychologically true, and profoundly important for the regulation of the religious life.

The Johannine writer shared, and built on, the mysticism of Paul, and carried it further. He more clearly identifies the Holy Spirit with the living personality of Christ himself. If the "Vine" of which the disciples are branches (ch. xv.) is said to be Christ and not the Spirit, it is only as a figure of his spiritual indwelling that it can have intelligible meaning. In this farewell discourse the Holy Spirit is introduced with a new title, that of "Paraclete" or Helper. If he is called "another Comforter, whom the Father will send," Jesus almost in the same breath declares that he will return himself.¹ The Paraclete will be his own Spirit, carrying forward in the disciples, and through them, the work that in the flesh he has been unable to complete. He will guide them into all the truth, taking the thoughts of Jesus and making them understood. Of this work of the Spirit the fourth Gospel is itself the most perfect example: it is precisely what Clement of Alexandria called it, "the spiritual Gospel," giving what the author believed to be the deeper meaning of much that Jesus had said and done.² The profound significance of this conception of the Spirit we shall be considering later.

Many questions, indeed, are left unanswered. The Spirit of Christ will indeed be the abiding life of his disciples, both as individuals and as a community; but what of the world

¹ John xiv. 16-18; cf. xvi. 7, 16. The masculine pronoun *ἐκεῖνος*, "he," here begins to be used instead of the neuter *αὐτό*, "it," which naturally goes with *πνεῦμα*.

² That this writer was not content with the traditional idea of the Spirit is indicated by his remarkable comment in John vii. 39: "The Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified." While he was present in the flesh his Spirit could not be apprehended in its full immanent power. Compare xvi. 7: "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come to you." There is certainly here a "hypostatizing" or personalizing of the Spirit; and from this the later speculation took its rise. But the writer does not regard the Spirit as a *separate* Person from the living Christ, any more than he thinks of any man's spirit as separate from himself.

of men at large? Nothing appears to be said, either by this writer or by Paul, of the Spirit in relation to mankind as a whole.¹ Nor is there anything to show that they thought of the Spirit in connection with the creation and maintenance of the visible universe. Their minds, it seems, were full of the experience of God which Christ had opened up for his followers; and of the reproduction in them of the life of God by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which was to them at once the Spirit of God and of Christ. That is the place and function of the Spirit as they conceived it; their whole purpose was practical, not speculative. In philosophical inquiry for its own sake they, like most Jews, took little interest.

THE SPIRIT IN POST-APOSTOLIC THOUGHT

After the first century Christian thought about the nature of God was based largely on the prologue to the fourth Gospel, with its "All things were made by him," and "The true light which lighteth every man." These things are said not of the Spirit but of the Logos; and the two conceptions had never been united. The latter was Greek in origin, having (apparently) replaced an earlier Jewish thought of the Divine "Wisdom" as agent in the creation;² and this conception also had never been identified with that of the Spirit of God. Different sets of ideas had attached themselves by tradition to the two terms. And, when Christian philosophy began, it was the Logos rather than the Spirit that attracted attention. The only early Christian writer, I believe, who clearly identifies the Spirit with the Logos is Hermas of

¹ The difficult passage (John xvi. 8-11) about the Spirit convincing "the world" in regard to sin, and righteousness, and judgment, probably means that the conviction would be effected through the manifestation of the Spirit by Christian believers, as Paul had written in 1 Cor. xiv. 24 f. (So E. F. Scott, *The Fourth Gospel*, p. 337, and Prin. H. Wheeler Robinson, *loc. cit.*, p. 8.)

² See above, pp. 42 ff.

Rome, author of *The Shepherd* (late first or early second century), a work which was thought by some to rank as Scripture.¹ The Apologist Justin Martyr usually distinguishes the Logos from the "prophetic Spirit," but in one passage he speaks of the Logos, not the Spirit, as causing the Virgin Mary to conceive.²

The first Christian thinker in post-Apostolic times to give much attention to the subject was Athenagoras, who in a "Plea for the Christians" addressed to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius about A.D. 176 clearly anticipates later Trinitarian thought. He speaks of the intense desire of Christian philosophers like himself to know God and His Word: "What is the unity of the Son with the Father, what the fellowship of the Father with the Son; what is the Spirit, what is the unity of these mighty Powers, and the distinction that exists between them, united as they are—the Spirit, the Son, the Father?" "The Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son by the unity and power of the Spirit."³ By Irenæus, Tertullian, and Origen the endeavour was made to indicate at once the subordination of the Son and the Spirit to the Father, and yet to show that the Spirit was really God Himself—not "a creature" like the angels, nor yet a semi-physical "emanation" from God, as some of the Gnostics contended.

But that the mind of the Church in general was not much exercised in regard to the Spirit is indicated by the very small place it occupies in the Creeds—which, for the most part, do no more than formally put it on record as an item of correct belief. The "Apostles' Creed," which probably reached its final form in the fourth century, states that Jesus Christ was "conceived of the Holy Ghost," and adds later

¹ "The Holy Pre-existent Spirit, which created the whole creation, God made to dwell in flesh that He desired. . . . He chose it (i.e. the person of Jesus) as a partner with the Holy Spirit" (*Shepherd of Hermas*, Similitude 6, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 447).

² Justin, *First Apology*, 33.

³ From his "Plea for Christians," quoted by H. B. Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church*, pp. 41 ff.

"I believe in the Holy Ghost." The original Creed of Nicæa (A.D. 325) has the last clause only; but as afterwards expanded it adds the words, "the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father (and the Son),¹ who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spake through the prophets." The Decree of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) does not explicitly mention the Spirit at all, but contents itself with reaffirming decisions of earlier Councils. None of the Creeds sets forth the really essential element in belief in the Spirit, that which made Christianity what it was in Apostolic days: belief in the Spirit as the inspiring life of God, or Christ, in the souls of believers generally and in the whole religious community. The fact obviously is that the actual experience of this inspiration had largely lapsed. In the theory of the Church the gift of the Spirit had come to be regarded as the prerogative of the hierarchy, handed down to them from the Apostles by episcopal ordination; even "prophecy" was now frowned on by those in authority. The efforts of the Montanists to revive it, in the second and third centuries, for the most part failed, in spite of Tertullian's powerful support; and in the reaction the Church became even less "spiritual" than it was before. This reaction, wrote a divine so cautious and orthodox as Dr. Swete, "threatened the Church with worse evils than the neglect of prophecy, and there were those on the anti-Montanist side who were ready to abandon all faith in spiritual gifts."² The loss of the Spirit was in part the cause, but it was also in part the effect, of the attention given by the leaders of the Church to speculative doctrine, their virtual identification of Christianity with orthodox belief, and their endeavour to cut off from the fellowship, and even to consign to eternal damnation, all whose thoughts ran in

¹ This is the "Filioque" clause that was inserted at some unknown time in the Western form of the Creed, but was never accepted in the East.

² Swete, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

different channels. In the words of Auguste Sabatier, Christianity from being the Religion of the Spirit had become a religion of Authority.

Leaving till the next chapter any attempt to follow further the development of the Church's doctrine of the Spirit, I must now endeavour in conclusion to gather our thoughts to the experience rather than to the doctrine, and to show why it is essential if Christianity is to be upheld in the modern world as Truth.

"THE HOLY SPIRIT" AS A CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

Christianity took over from Judaism a pure and ethical monotheistic faith, with a strong assurance of the personality of God. There are dangers in all good things, and the danger of such a faith is that it should fall into "Deism": that, as the thought of God enlarges, He should be regarded as a separate and distant Being, able to communicate with His world (if at all) only through some mediatorial agent or agents. We see this danger in Judaism, especially after the decline of prophecy. We see it in Islam to-day. Christianity was largely saved from it¹—first by the assurance that God Himself had come close to men in Jesus (had, indeed, taken human nature upon Himself), and second by the experience of the Spirit as His living presence, indwelling, controlling, guiding the individual and collective life of those who had been redeemed by Christ. Though Jesus himself (according to the Synoptic story) had said little of the Spirit, he had manifested in himself its unhindered sway, its unbroken inspiration. And so, when he had left his followers through

¹ Professor Harnack writes of the early Christians as filled with "a feeling of perfect confidence that God was present, and a conviction of His *care* and of His *providence*. No mode of thought was more alien to early Christianity than Deism. The early Christians knew the Father in heaven; they knew that God was near them, and reigning in their life with a might of His own. This was the God they proclaimed abroad." (*Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. I., p. 119.)

death, but returned (as they believed) in spiritual power, they could not, however hard they tried, keep separate their experience of the Spirit from their experience that he himself was with them still. This was *the Holy Spirit*—the Spirit of God, but also the Spirit of Jesus, His perfect Son, living on in them his own life of sonship, illuminating their minds, purifying their affections, energizing their wills, and even healing their bodies. I believe, as has been already suggested,¹ that we shall do well to keep the term “the Holy Spirit” as a name for this fully conscious experience of God, through Christ, in men; and to think of the Holy Spirit as personal *because Christ is personal*, and has shown us in himself the personal aspect of God. Such usage will be in accordance with the New Testament in its highest ranges of Christian thought.

“THE SPIRIT”: A WIDER APPLICATION

But the facts of life assure us—more and more as human nature and human religions are carefully studied—that God is at work in men, and reveals Himself in measure to them, where Christ is unknown; and even where, through misunderstanding or faulty presentation, his religion is not accepted. We are sure that God has never left Himself, at any time or in any place, without some witness in the souls of men, however unresponsive they may be. Scattered phrases used by Paul and “John”² indicate that so far as their minds were turned at all to this matter their assurance was similar to our own. Christian philosophers like Justin and Origen believed it, and attributed it to the universal Logos.³ For us the Logos conception has had its day. But is

¹ See above, p. 140.

² E.g. Acts xiv. 17, xvii. 24–28; Rom. i. 19–21, ii. 14 f.; John i. 9, vi. 44 f., etc.

³ “Whatever either philosophers or lawgivers uttered well, they elaborated by finding and contemplating some part of the Word (Logos).

there any reason why we should not use the word "Spirit" in this larger sense? Larger, I mean, than the sense in which the Holy Spirit is consciously connected with Jesus Christ and recognized as *his* Spirit—not larger than that in which Christ himself is the supreme and only adequate expression of God in human terms. We need a word to stand for God as in some measure indwelling and enlightening *all* human souls, and I suggest that we may rightly so interpret "the Spirit." If we cannot claim for it clear New Testament authority, this is because none of the New Testament writers appear to have pondered deeply the oneness of all mankind, and the relation of God to the human race as a whole.

Such a conception dawned on the minds of the early Quakers, who spoke of it sometimes as the Seed of God, but more often as the Light Within. It is elaborated by Barclay in the chapters in his *Apology* on "Immediate Revelation" and "Universal and Saving Light." His treatment of the subject may be regarded as in some respects a "rationalization" of cruder expressions used by his predecessors in the attempt to share with others the illumination they believed themselves to have received; but it is marred by the dualism of seventeenth century philosophy and an inadequate psychology.¹ Without attempting now to enter upon a psychological inquiry into the meaning and value of the "Inward Light,"² it is enough to say that the Quakers believed, in the words of Barclay, that "the Spirit of God is the fountain of all truth and sound reason"; that "the Divine revelation, and inward illumination, is that which is evident by itself, forcing the

. . . Christ was partially known even by Socrates, for he was and is the Word that is in every man" (Justin, *Apol.* ii. 10). "Jesus has at all times been doing good to the human race. For no noble deed among men has ever been done without the Divine Logos visiting the souls of those who even for a brief space were able to receive its operations" (Origen, *adv. Cels.* vi., quoted by Hort, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, p. 133).

¹ See my *Quaker Thought and History*, pp. 11-14 and 28-31.

² I have tried to do this to some extent in the book just mentioned, pp. 46-53.

well-disposed understanding and irresistibly moving it to assent, by its own evidence and clearness.”¹ The argument is directed mainly against the Protestant theology of the seventeenth century, which had virtually erected the Scriptures into an infallible and final court of appeal in all matters of religion, as a substitute for the Catholic appeal to the authority of an infallible Church. Whatever defects there were in the Quaker presentation of the Inward Light, it is now widely recognized that without a basis of inward authority, that is, the compelling power of Truth itself, the outward authorities in which men have trusted, whether of Church or Bible, could never have come into being.² It was because the prophets *knew* that the fresh thoughts of God which had come to them were true, that they uttered them fearlessly in face of widespread opposition from the traditionalists of their day; and it was because of a Divine witness in the hearts of others that the unpopular message of these “heretics” came at last to be accepted. So it was with our Lord himself, who appealed to an inward witness in the hearts of his hearers,³ and so it has been with many leaders of new movements in the Christian Church. The heresy of one age becomes the orthodoxy of another, just because the human soul, in so far as it is indwelt by the Spirit of God, is a living and growing organism; and because, as its powers develop, new ranges of truth are perceived and laid hold of. Religion is alive and progressive just in so far as the mind of man is *not* tied down by formal statements, however true in their time—as though these could ever exhaust the truth that can be revealed and known—but is free to follow the Spirit in the further revelations it has to give. As the Johannine

¹ *Apology*, Prop. II., section 15.

² E.g. A. Sabatier, *Religions of Authority*, pp. 322, etc.; Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, pp. 141, 166, etc.

³ E.g. Luke xii. 57, “Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?” Compare John viii. 46, “If I say truth, why do ye not believe me?”

Christ says to his disciples, "I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now."¹ True Christianity is the religion of the Spirit. "The letter killeth," wrote Paul, "but the Spirit giveth life"; and "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."²

TWO OBJECTIONS

Objections may reasonably be raised against the method here adopted of presenting "Christianity as Truth." It may be said that instead of defending the doctrines of Christianity I am casting doubt on some of them as mere "notions" without basis in reality, and am resolving our religion into a vague subjectivism that loses contact with history.

(1) I have quoted with sympathy the dictum of Auguste Sabatier, that "the dogma which made the Holy Spirit a metaphysical entity paralysed and killed his dynamic influence in the Christian life." Admitting, as I have done, that the dogma was reached by the Christian intellect, speculating on the basis of expressions used in the New Testament, especially by Paul and "John"—admitting also that the Holy Spirit was to inspire *all* the activities of Christians, including their use of the intellect—why should I not regard this formulation of a dogma, and with it the whole process whereby the Church became an institution ruled by authority, as *itself* the work of the Spirit and the result of inspiration? Such a claim is virtually made by Catholics.

The answer, I think, is not difficult to find. Only on a frankly pantheistic basis, on which I for one do not build, can all human activities be regarded as equally due to the working of God. The intellect *may* be enlightened by His Spirit and directed to the discovery of new truth, but it may not. Whether in any particular case it has been so

¹ John xvi. 12.

² 2 Cor. iii. 6, 17.

enlightened and guided, must be judged by its performance and by the results. If it has had the right facts before it, and treated them in the right way, then the result of its inquiries may be the extension of known truth. But if, as is to be feared was the case here, it has overlooked some of the most vital facts that needed to be considered (such as the general sense of inspiration, personal and collective, that marked Christianity in its best days); if it has tried to work out by a speculative process the implications of a few isolated "texts," taken as Divine oracles apart from their context; if its procedure, as was the case with much Greek philosophy, has been purely deductive and not also inductive; then we may well distrust and freely criticize its conclusions. In this criticism we must be fair enough to recognize that, even under such limitations, some results of value may have been achieved. There is, for example, the Western dogma of the "double procession": that the Holy Spirit "proceedeth from the Father and the Son"—than which nothing might seem more remote from any possible human experience. And yet, it may be, the "Filioque clause" served to express, in however abstract a form, the Christian consciousness that the Holy Spirit was indeed the Spirit of *Jesus*, and implied the reproduction in his followers of his own life and principles of action. Who can say that the comparative deadness and aridity of the Eastern Churches is wholly unconnected with the fact that in their Creed this truth was not suggested?

Yet, when such allowance is in fairness made, the difference remains between conclusions painfully elaborated by processes of reasoning, and convictions that spring up spontaneously in the soul or result from an instinctive or intuitive response to truth when it is once presented. Religious faith, as we have seen,¹ rests in the last resort upon such intuition, though it constantly needs correcting and controlling by intellectual criticism. And since intuition has its

¹ See above, pp. 82 ff.

home in the deepest levels of our complex being, where we believe the Divine and the human meet and blend, it is apparently better adapted to be the organ of the Spirit than are more superficial powers of the mind like the senses and the intellect. All our "faculties," no doubt, are intended to be enlightened and controlled by the Spirit; but they may easily get out of hand, and go their own way in ill-regulated and disproportioned activity. And this may well have happened in much of the Christian speculation by which the Creeds were elaborated. In this sense Barclay's contrast between "reason" and the Spirit may be accepted.¹

(2) Another objection is that by enlarging the conception of the Spirit to cover all inward illumination leading to a right use of the human mind, both in pre-Christian times and to-day where Christ is known or unknown, we cut off Christianity from its roots in history and in the revelation brought by Christ. We can answer, I think, in terms akin to those used by Origen; but we need no longer try to distinguish the Spirit of God from His Wisdom or Logos. Just as Origen could say, in reply to Celsus, that "Jesus has always been doing good to the human race"—because the Divine Logos, which became incarnate in him, has always been visiting the souls of men—so we believe there is in God an element of Personality whereby He is eternally in touch with all His offspring, formed in His own image; and that this element of the Divine received its incarnation and perfect expression in Jesus. The Spirit, therefore, however widely we extend the connotation of the term, is no other than the Spirit of Christ. But we need a term to distinguish the Spirit, when *consciously recognized* as that of Christ himself,

¹ E.g. "We do distinguish between the certain knowledge of God and the uncertain; betwixt the spiritual knowledge and the literal; the saving heart-knowledge and the soaring airy head-knowledge. The last, we confess, may be divers ways obtained; but the first by no other way than the inward immediate manifestation and revelation of God's Spirit, shining in and upon the heart, enlightening and opening the understanding" (*Apology*, Prop. II., section 1).

living on in the hearts of his redeemed and believing people; and this is given us in the phrase "the Holy Spirit." The difference lies in man's apprehension of God, which can be, now that He has revealed Himself in Christ, stronger, clearer, more definite and potent than before. It was written in the Apostolic age that "God is Light." The diffused light of the sun fills the landscape; it is the same light that the lens gathers to a focus and concentrates in a powerful beam.

The modern world has little use for a theory of the Spirit which, by a process of speculation divorced from the facts of human experience, makes Him a "Person" in the God-head wholly distinct from man. But still, as much as in the first century, we need the Holy Spirit as the indwelling life of the risen Christ in all his true followers and in the Christian community. This is the distinctive note of Apostolic Christianity; it is what gives to our religion its unique claim to be called "spiritual." It is what makes Christianity not a creed but a life; not an institution but an inspiration. Because of the Holy Spirit, Christianity, when apparently decaying or even dead, has been able again and again to renew its youth. Because of this it can hold before the world a thought of God as at once immanent and transcendent, avoiding on the one hand the desert of Deism and on the other the slough of Pantheism. Through experience of the Spirit it can free men from the shackles of a legal code, while keeping ever before them the loftiest ethical standard; for its way of life is no other than that of Jesus.

And, if we are right in widening the thought of the Spirit beyond its New Testament bounds—taking a liberty similar to that used by Paul when he extended its operation from special manifestations like prophecy and glossolalia to the whole life of the Christian—we may discern the work of the Spirit of God in all the progress man has made. The discoveries of science, reverence for truth in nature and history, the development of art and literature, the inspiration of

poetry and music, the nobler thoughts of brotherhood that are, we trust, beginning to bind together men of different nations and classes—all these and other factors of human progress we may rightly attribute to the abiding presence and activity of the Spirit in the life of mankind. God is leading the world forward by the light of Truth, and in His Spirit there is no narrowness.

SUMMARY

THE doctrine of God as tri-personal Unity is a theory developed by the human mind to interpret certain facts of Christian experience. These underlying facts are fully recognized in the New Testament, but the doctrine is not there formulated. God was felt to have been manifested in Jesus (as Son) and in the life of Christians (as the Holy Spirit). As compared with Hebrew monotheism, Christianity broadened and deepened man's conception of his spiritual Environment.

The development of the doctrine began in the second century, but was not completed till the fourth. Its moving force was desire to fix in Christian thought the Divine humanity of Jesus and the immanence of God Himself as Holy Spirit; but in the course of speculation the basis of experience was largely forgotten. Study of the terms used indicates that the human mind was dealing with the incomprehensible. This was recognized in part by Augustine, who tried to show that human nature is itself triune. The Athanasian Creed, and the Socinian reaction.

Modern thought shows a certain re-approach to Trinitarian ideas. Christian philosophy demands duality in the nature of God—as transcendent and yet immanent, as eternal and yet manifesting Himself in time. The need of Redemption, personal and social, is widely recognized. But the basis of the thought of God as Father and Son, and still more as Holy Spirit, remains experimental rather than speculative.

CHAPTER VII

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

FROM very early days it has been held that an essential element in the "truth" of Christianity is a peculiar doctrine as to the nature of God. In the Athanasian Creed this (with a section on the Incarnation) is made the whole of "the Catholic Faith." God is One; to the Divine Unity orthodox Christianity has always tried to be as true as has Judaism, or Islam, or modern Unitarianism. And yet, within this Unity, Christianity has envisaged a certain complexity: the Godhead is differentiated, though by no means divided, into Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Analogues to the Christian Trinity may indeed be found in some of the Eastern religions, and also in Neo-platonism; but Christianity alone, I believe, has reached a doctrine of God as tri-personal Unity. Is this doctrine capable of defence as truth, and on what basis does it rest?

THE NEW TESTAMENT

Many Christians, it seems, suppose that the doctrine of the Trinity must be accepted as the core of Christ's revelation of God. If to human reason it is a puzzle without a solution, it is to be believed because Christ has declared it, and the truth of such a declaration it would be impious to dispute. The objection to this view is that it cannot survive a careful study of the Gospels. No evidence is to be found that our Lord ever attempted to expound a speculative doctrine about the nature of God. Rather, he took for granted the Jewish conception to which he and his hearers were accustomed; but he filled it with new ethical meaning and richer

efficacy for the life of the spirit. His thought of God is more deeply religious than that of any other great world teacher; but of speculation about it there is, in his recorded utterances, hardly a trace. Constantly he speaks of God as Father, sometimes of himself as Son¹; but these are terms of experience, not of metaphysic. There is indeed the baptismal formula of Matt. xxviii. 19, "baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," but it is practically certain that this passage, in its present form at least, represents no genuine utterance of his.² When or how it got into our first Gospel is unknown, but undoubtedly the baptismal formula reflects the usage of the Church—perhaps, since it also appears in the *Didache* (vii.), from the early second century onwards.

In the rest of the New Testament the absence of Trinitarian language is equally marked. The passage concerning the "three heavenly witnesses" of 1 John v. 8 (A.V.) has been omitted by the Revisers without a word of explanation. It appears in some *Latin* MSS. dating from about A.D. 380, but in no *Greek* MS. of the New Testament earlier than the fifteenth century.³ Most assuredly the words were not penned by the author of that Epistle. There is Paul's great benediction at the end of 2 Corinthians: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all." Here it will be noted that the order of the terms is that of Christian experience, not that of theory. Christ, with his gracious influence, comes first; then the love of God which he reveals; and lastly the fellowship of believers with one another which arises from

¹ Especially in Matt. xi. 27=Luke x. 22.

² The evidence is that Christian baptism, wherever it is alluded to in the Acts, is into the name of Christ alone; that the first Christians show no knowledge of any command to "make disciples of all the nations"; and that Eusebius, the Church historian of the early fourth century, frequently quotes this passage in a simpler form, without allusion to baptism or the Trinity. (See Vol. I., *Christianity as Life*, pp. 166 ff.)

³ Brooke, *The Johanne Epistles*, pp. 154 ff.

a common experience of his Spirit in their individual and collective life. The passage is a perfect expression of essential Christian experience, but not of conscious and articulate theologizing. In 1 Peter i. 2 we read of "the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." In Eph. ii. 18 the writer says, "For through him (Christ) we both (Jew and Gentile) have our access in one Spirit unto the Father." The three terms are brought together again in Titus iii. 4-6: "When the kindness of God our Saviour and his love toward man appeared . . . he saved us through the laver of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour." In each case the order of the terms is not that of formal theology.

Those, I believe, are the chief passages in the New Testament in which God, Christ, and the Spirit are spoken of together; and it will be recognized at once that they do not bear out the idea that a conception of God as three "Persons" was known by the primitive Church and felt by it to have been revealed by Christ. What the New Testament does contain is—not the developed belief as it was gradually worked out and finally expressed in the Athanasian Creed—but the raw material of religious experience¹ with which the Greek intellect worked in achieving that development. The doctrine of the Trinity was not "revealed" by Christ in the sense in which he revealed the character or quality of God; it is a fabric wrought out by the intellect, endeavouring, in the light of Scripture passages, to interpret certain facts of Christian experience. It is as truly a *theory* as is the doctrine of Gravitation.

¹ For a parallel note this passage in the *Journal* of George Fox, which is wholly untheological: "Though I read the Scriptures, which spoke of Christ and of God, yet I knew him not but by revelation, as he who hath the key did open, and as *the Father of life drew me to his Son by his Spirit*" (Vol. I., p. 12).

Those facts were broadly these. The first Christians had, directly or indirectly, experience of Jesus Christ as a man who had lived a life of such unexampled beauty and love and spiritual power that they found themselves using of him terms (like "Lord") that had hitherto been reserved for God. They knew, secondly, that he had made the word "God" glow for them with a warmth of meaning which they expressed (as he had done) by the term "Father." Frequently they refer to God as "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." And, thirdly, assurance of his resurrection convinced them, after Pentecost at any rate, that he had not left them, but was with them and working in them still by the invisible power of his Spirit. In the mind of Paul especially this conviction of the living presence of the Spirit of Christ drove into the background the eschatological idea that Christ had *gone away* to a distant region from which he was expected to return in glory to judge the world; and from the fourth Gospel this expectation has almost disappeared: Christ, for the writer, *has* returned as the Spirit. This threefold experience—of Christ, of God, and of the Spirit—must always be borne in mind as the basis (the only real basis) for Trinitarian discussion. Whatever philosophic value the doctrine of the Trinity may have, it sprang not from philosophy but from religious experience.

As soon as the Lordship of Christ was acknowledged (as it evidently was) by Jewish disciples, they became aware that the bare monotheism in which they had been trained was insufficient to account for their experience of God. While they still shrank in horror from "heathen" polytheism, its deifications of men and its ideas of temporary incarnation, they could not avoid the conviction that Christ had shown them God under human limitations. The Divine nature, therefore, must contain some element that could express itself in a perfect human life. The way, as we have seen, had been prepared for such a conception by the differentiation

and partial hypostatizing—in the Book of Proverbs and the later Wisdom literature—of God's "Wisdom" as His agent in creation and revelation. This differentiated element in the being of the One God had been united by Philo with the Greek conception of the Logos; and it was this principle which the fourth Evangelist (and before him, virtually, Paul and the author of Hebrews) believed to have become incarnate in Jesus Christ. Within the Divine Unity, and without any suggestion of a second God, Paul found room for "one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things."¹ The Logos, as the fourth Evangelist writes in his prologue, was not only "*with* God," but "*was* God" in (so to say) a more inclusive sense of the word.² In both cases the differentiation was not the result of Greek proneness to speculation, but a genuine attempt to interpret facts of experience. Paul prefaces his distinction between "God" and "Lord" by saying that "if any man thinketh that he knoweth anything, he knoweth not yet as he ought to know; but *if any man loveth God* the same is known of him." And the Johannine writer clearly bases his whole theory that "the Logos became flesh" on an appeal to experience: "We beheld his glory" (John i. 14).

But Christian experience involved yet another distinction. God had not only manifested Himself in the perfect manhood of Jesus; He was still manifesting Himself in his true followers, who felt that they shared (in measure) their Master's life of sonship. "The Holy Spirit" was truly God, the same God who had inspired the prophets and dwelt in Jesus himself; but who was known in greater fullness and nearness after Jesus was "glorified" (John vii. 39). Hence

¹ 1. Cor. viii. 5 f.

² Ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος (John i. 1). There is no need to translate πρὸς τὸν θεόν, as some have done, by any fanciful phrase such as "face to face with God" or "in the direction of God." In all probability it is nothing but Johannine Greek for παρὰ τῷ θεῷ (Rendel Harris, *The Prologue to St. John's Gospel*, pp. 6 ff.).

the richness of the Christian experience of God could not be expressed in fewer terms than those used by Paul in his final prayer for the Corinthians: it needed allusion to Christ and the Spirit. God had manifested Himself as Father in Jesus Christ His Son; and, as the Holy Spirit, was continuing to manifest Himself in the Christian society.

While the New Testament gives us religion rather than philosophy, its thought of God undoubtedly meets some of our philosophical needs. This will be considered further when we have followed to some extent the development of Trinitarian belief; meanwhile it may be observed that the Jewish assurance of the transcendence of God is enriched by Christian experience of His immanence. As to the immanence of God in *Nature*, I doubt indeed whether any of the New Testament writers show as much consciousness of this as did some of the later psalmists¹; but our Lord certainly seems to have felt it when he spoke of God as feeding the birds and clothing the lilies. The idea of God as "Creator" of the world, of which the Jewish mind was full, is too suggestive of a Divine Artificer to be easily construed in terms of immanence. But the New Testament assuredly does give us a thought of God as immanent in *human life*—first in that of Jesus, and second in his redeemed and faithful people. "The Father" of the New Testament, as Bishop Temple has reminded us,² is a richer conception than the "Yahweh" of Hebrew faith. The whole idea of God is altered—made more inward and more available for the needs of the spiritual life—by acceptance of His self-revelation in Christ, and assurance of His abiding presence as the Holy Spirit. The spiritual Environment, to human consciousness at least, is broadened and deepened.

¹ Note especially Psa. civ. and cxxxix.

² *Christus Veritas*, p. 278.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRINITARIAN THEORY

Had the idea of God been left where the New Testament leaves it—with recognition of a threefold manifestation of God, but without any formulation of a Trinity of “Persons”—it may well be doubted whether the religious life of the Christian Church would have suffered any loss. But historical conditions rendered this impossible. The Greek mind, even when it had become Christian, was full of questions, to which it was driven to seek intellectual answers. We have already noted this in the case of the Apologist Athenagoras, who came near, even before the end of the second century, to formulating a doctrine of the Trinity.¹ And there was the urgent need to clarify and maintain the Christian idea of God against imperfect conceptions which came to be known as “heresies.” In particular, the nature of the Son caused difficulty. While it was generally agreed that Christ was the Logos or Son of God, the question arose to what stage of his history this identification belonged. Was he at first, as the Adoptionists held, a man like ourselves, on whom at the time of his baptism the Logos descended? Did he become the Son of God by a miraculous conception? Or was he from the first, as the Gnostics contended, a heavenly Being or emanation from God, who masqueraded for a time on this earth of ours in the semblance, without the reality, of a human life? Both the Adoptionist and the Gnostic “heresies” were combated by the more orthodox theologians. Then there was the Sabellian revolt against the complexities of philosophic thought, and the endeavour to simplify and preserve the sole “monarchy” of God by representing the Son and the Spirit as mere *modes* or manifestations of the One Divine Being—which involved a virtual denial of the humanity of Jesus and of the relation of the Paraclete to him as *his* Spirit. Against these and other lines of thought that were felt to

¹ See above, p. 144.

be off the track were leaders like Irenæus, Tertullian and Origen. The last-named in particular pondered deeply on the nature of the Son, concluding that he was not a "created" being, but co-eternal with the Father,¹ and that therefore his "generation" was an eternal process. But all of them found difficulty in showing that there was in the fullness of Divine being a separate and necessary place for the Spirit. Irenæus indeed made play with the conception of *two Hands* of God (His Word and His Wisdom) by which He made the world and all created things—the Word being equated with the Son, and Wisdom with the Spirit²—but this was never followed up: the common-sense of the Church forbade it to take literally the figurative language of the Old Testament on which the theory was based. I cannot find that anyone before Augustine really grappled with the difficulty of giving a philosophical interpretation to "the Spirit." In the great Arian controversy of the fourth century attention was (as we have noticed) directed with such intensity to the nature of the Son that the Spirit was almost ignored. By Hilary of Poitiers and the three great Cappadocian Fathers, Basil and the two Gregories, much was done to fix the meaning of Trinitarian terms; but their work reveals how very largely the questions at issue were matters of words. It resulted in defining the nature of God as being one *ousia* (or "essence") in three *hypostases* (or "Persons" in a very technical sense). But this word *hypostasis*, which by the end of the fourth century, largely through their efforts, came to be used by Christian teachers to indicate the *separate* natures of the

¹ It is doubtful whether in the New Testament the term "Son" (as distinguished from Logos) is applied to Christ in his eternal nature, or only to Jesus as a man in time. But certainly Heb. i. comes very near to it.

² See Rendel Harris, *op. cit.*, pp. 46 ff. Such ideas were of course based on Scripture passages where God is spoken of as acting in creation by His Word, Wisdom, or Hand. For "Word" (e.g.) see Gen. i. 3, Psa. xxxiii. 6; for "Wisdom" Prov. iii. 19 f., viii. 22-31; for "Hand" Isa. xli. 20, lxvi. 2. But the O.T. nowhere identifies the "Wisdom" of God with His "Spirit."

three Divine Persons, had formerly been employed in a wider sense as equivalent to the *ousia* which these had in common.¹ *Hypostasis* is properly translated into Latin by *substantia*; but this word could not be used since it had already been appropriated as the equivalent of the Greek *ousia*. Till about the middle of the fourth century *ousia* and *hypostasis* had almost the same meaning; they are indeed identified in the anathematizing Appendix to the Creed of Nicæa (A.D. 325).² So that in 325 anyone who denied that Father and Son had the same *hypostasis* was declared a heretic; whereas by 400 anyone who affirmed the same was off the line of orthodoxy. In the Decree of Chalcedon (451) the word *hypostasis* is expressly identified, not with *ousia* but with *prosopon*, the nearest Greek word for "person." So largely had orthodoxy become a matter of insisting on agreement in the use of words—words, indeed, that stand for ideas which the human mind can never clearly present to itself. The fact that all this speculation arose out of Christian experience, and had little meaning or value except in reference to Christian living, was almost forgotten. It would certainly not be fair to say of the great orthodox leaders like Athanasius and the Cappadocians—as could be said with truth of Arius—that they were not interested in Redemption. They were; but their efforts (when once the full Divinity of the Son had been established) were mainly directed to showing that the Spirit was just as truly God as was the Son—that he was not a "created" being, as the angels were supposed to be.³ This was important, because (if we assume the immanence of the Spirit) it helped to preserve the thought of the immanence of God, which

¹ The word is used to express the Divine nature in Heb. i. 3, where the Son is said to be "the impress of [God's] *hypostasis*."

² Mackintosh, *The Person of Jesus Christ*, pp. 181 ff.: "But those who say that [the Son] . . . is of a different *hypostasis* or *ousia* [from the Father] . . . the Catholic Church anathematizes."

³ Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church*, especially pp. 211-221.

Arian views certainly did not. On the other hand, the more the Spirit was hypostatized, or regarded as a separate "Person," the more difficult became the thought of immanence.

The difficulty of finding in the Divine nature a necessary place and meaning for the Spirit was faced in some measure by Augustine (died A.D. 430), who tried to ground his thought of the Trinity in human experience, by finding analogies for it in our own personality. Had he succeeded in this, he would have been able to show what no theologian had yet shown—that a philosophic thought of God requires a separate place for the Spirit. His construction of the doctrine, however, seems to throw little real light on the matter. Our human nature, he says, consists of memory, understanding, and will; and "there are relations between these three which correspond in their measure to the relations between the Divine Persons."¹ In the light of modern psychology, it seems quite impossible to divide the human *ego* into subsistences which can have relations to one another, and so the analogy fails us.² Elsewhere Augustine speaks of the Spirit as the mutual *love* that binds Father and Son into a unity; and claims that this love cannot be a mere abstraction, since "God is Love," and God is a reality.³ It is difficult to see how mutual love, or sharing in the Divine nature, can be erected into a distinct "Person," even in the vaguest sense of that term. Augustine himself, while freely using the term "Person," was quite aware of its inappropriateness. "Certainly," he says, "there are Three. Yet when it is asked, what Three, human language fails from great poverty of speech. We say 'three Persons,' *not that it may be so said, but that we may not keep silence.*"⁴ That is one of his

¹ Swete, *op. cit.*, p. 331.

² The courageous attempt of Mr. S. A. McDowall, in his book *Evolution and the Doctrine of the Trinity*, to revive the Augustinian construction will be noticed later.

³ Swete, *op. cit.*, p. 325.

⁴ *De Trin.* v. 9, quoted by Fisher, *History of Christian Doctrine*, p. 178.

wise sayings. There is certainly in his thought no trace of Tritheism, and it would have been well for many modern theologians if they had been equally cautious and reticent. Any attempt, for instance, to regard the Trinity as a "Divine Society," or to posit three "centres of consciousness" in God, lands us at once in Tritheism, and Augustine would have had none of it.

It was largely Augustine's speculations that moulded the language of the "Quicunque Vult" or Athanasian Creed, which probably dates from about the middle of the fifth century.¹ In this document the process of "rationalization" is carried to its limit, and an abstruse doctrine of the inner being of God is represented as the essence of Christianity, no allusion whatever being made to religious experience or to Christian living. Through the Middle Ages it remained as the standard of orthodoxy, and a basis for endless speculation among the Schoolmen; and it is not surprising that after the Reformation its dogmatic authority began to be questioned. Servetus was put to death by Calvin as a heretic; but his protest was continued in the sixteenth century by the Socinians, though shorn of its Neo-platonic mysticism. The early Socinians based their opposition to the dogma of the Trinity on Scripture, where they found warrant for subordinating the Son to the Father. By the Deists of the eighteenth century the attempt was made, in the name of Reason, to clear Christianity of its "mysterious" elements; and many in recent times have endeavoured to establish Theistic belief as the only reasonable interpretation of the universe, without attempting to justify the Trinitarian doctrine.

TRINITARIANISM IN MODERN THOUGHT

The tendency of later theological thought, if I judge rightly, has been somewhat more in the Trinitarian direction.

¹ So Curtis, *History of Creeds and Confessions*, pp. 82 ff.

There is not, I think, any disposition to revive the old speculations about the inner nature of Deity, as though our intellect had power to penetrate its mysteries even with the help of "revelation." It is widely recognized that the only God we can know—the *real* God, so far as we are concerned—is God as related to the world and to human consciousness. The old confidence in purely intellectual processes to bring us into touch with Reality is shaken—even if these processes start from statements found in Scripture. There is a revived interest in religious experience, and greater willingness to allow weight to mystical intuition, provided always that this is checked and controlled by intellect.¹ It is by intuition that we are assured of the ultimate values of Beauty and Goodness, and these are felt to be vital factors of any knowledge we can have of God. Moreover, belief in Evolution has made it far more difficult than formerly to establish by intellectual proofs the reality of a Divine Artificer or Designer of the world; and if there is a Purpose in things it is felt that this must be immanent and not imposed from without. Hence bare Theism is for many modern people more difficult of belief than Christianity, which with its Logos and Spirit does profess to give us a God immanent in the world and in humanity.

Further, in spite of some appearances to the contrary, the modern world is increasingly alive to the reality of Sin and to the need of Redemption, personal and social. Particularly is this the case since the terrific manifestation of disorder in human life by the great world-war. The only God in whom it now seems to many people worth while to believe is a God who can and will (if we will let Him) redeem humanity from its inherent tendency to destroy itself by selfishness,

¹ Because, as has been noted above (p. 32), mystical insight has no language of its own, and can only express itself in the conceptual terms coined by the intellect. In the inevitable attempt to "rationalize" religious experience (which must be done if it is to be shared at all with others) many mistakes are possible.

individual and corporate. Whatever the faults of the Christianity that has hitherto been professed, it is at least recognized as having a Redemption to offer: Redemption through a redeeming Son of God who conquers human evil by sacrificial love, and who through a sanctifying Spirit does, in Paul's vivid phrase, "shed abroad" the same love in the hearts of men.¹ This aspect of Christianity will receive further consideration in later chapters.

The central difficulty of Christianity, which is (in my judgment) at the same time its chief glory, and which lies close to the heart of its Trinitarian conception of God, is that of the manifestation of the Eternal in the midst of Time. God—if He be God indeed—is, as the ancient prophet saw, "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy."² He is no part of the time-process, but He has initiated it and He observes and controls it from above. The transcendence of the eternal God is an essential element in vital religion, and Christianity preserves it in the thought of God as "the Father." But the moment anyone is brought, as the first Christians certainly were brought, to acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ—to see with Paul that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself"³—he has implicitly avowed belief that the Eternal not only initiates and controls the time-process but *can and does come into it*. He manifests Himself in certain events of history, in the life especially of a particular man who was born, lived, and died. Christianity from the first has claimed to be not merely a higher teaching *about* God, but *an act of God in time*, whereby He gave to men a new knowledge of Himself. The God of Christianity is not the Absolute of a pantheistic philosophy which finds Divine action in everything that happens, bad as well as good—in events in general but in nothing in particular. The Christian idea of a God who does particular things in history is of course

¹ Rom. v. 5.² Isa. lvii. 15.³ 2 Cor. v. 19.

Hebraic—a development of the Judaism which was also a historical religion, attributing the events that had moulded Israel's history to personal acts of Yahweh. But the belief that God had disclosed Himself in the life of a particular man was new and distinctive.

The possibility of such disclosure is the central problem of Christianity as Truth, and it was undoubtedly present to the minds of Christian thinkers at a very early stage. As we know, the fourth Evangelist, and before him (virtually) Paul and the author of Hebrews, found the solution in the doctrine of the Logos, which we have interpreted as the *self-limitation* of the Infinite and Eternal, for the purpose of self-expression in creation, revelation, and redemption. Such self-limitation is the outcome of His nature, which is love. This thought necessarily carries with it a Duality in the idea of God. There is God as revealing Himself, and God as revealed—revealed in so far as men could apprehend the revelation. There is God as the Eternal, whom (as such) “no man hath seen nor can see”¹; there is God in time, manifested above all in the person of His Logos-Son, Jesus Christ, “whom we have seen with our eyes and our hands have handled.”² *How* the Eternal can enter into, and be manifested in, the time-process we cannot understand, any more than we can understand the eternal itself; but (as we have seen)³ a measure of the same difficulty meets us in all human personality. There is, in all self-conscious beings who can frame a purpose, an element that transcends the time-series, and is therefore properly called eternal.⁴

The term “Father” when applied to God has, as Dr. W. N. Clarke has reminded us,⁵ a double connotation,

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 16.

² 1 John i. 1.

³ See above, p. 55 f.

⁴ The difficulty is, of course, that we cannot clearly conceive the eternal or timeless, because all our experience is of successive events in time. We tend to interpret eternity itself as an endless *succession*, which it is not. To the mind of God as eternal there can be no before and after; but this to us is inconceivable.

⁵ In *The Christian Doctrine of God*, especially p. 248.

according as the language used is that of Christian theology or religious experience. In *theology* "the Father" is God as the underlying principle of Unity in the world, the Source of all reality, the Fount of life and progress. In what Eckhart called "the Godhead" there is much that has not been and cannot be revealed to men, in regard to which our only right attitude is that of a reverent agnosticism. But in the language of *religion*—of the Lord's Prayer, of the Gospels and the New Testament generally—"the Father" is the *revealed* God, known to us above all as He is manifested in His Son. "One Fatherhood belongs to God remotest from us, and the other to God nearest us—an anomaly that has often been perplexing." Some thinkers, like H. G. Wells,¹ have thought it needful to represent the "finite" conception of God as the only one that concerns our religious life. But Christianity holds them together, and assures us that "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" is a true picture, in so far as our spiritual needs require a picture, of the ultimate Reality. The Father is partly revealed, but He is also more than can be revealed. The "high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity" dwells *also* "with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit." In trusting our lives to the God known in experience we are, if Christianity is true, trusting them to Reality, and not to a figment of the religious imagination.

The Christian thought of God, therefore, while it came into the world in the form not of a philosophy but of a personal Life, meets some of man's perennial requirements for a satisfying world-outlook. It gives him a God who is at

¹ In *God the Invisible King*. In this book it is interesting to note that the writer, while disclaiming with some vehemence any approach to Trinitarian belief, admits naïvely some of the considerations that gave rise to it. "For the purposes of human relationship it is impossible to deny that God *presents himself as finite*, as struggling and taking a part against evil" (p. xvi., italics his). The Invisible King, the God of the Heart, "is not of matter nor of space; *he comes into them*" (p. 72, italics mine). Mr. Wells does not mean by these statements what they mean to Christians; but his God, as he himself suggests, is closely akin to the "Christ-God" in whom Christians rejoice.

once transcendent above the world and immanent in it; eternal or timeless and yet expressed in the stream of events; active in the moulding of a physical universe in which should develop a world of free beings formed in His own image; active also in refashioning that world by delivering it from the disorder wrought by Sin.

Our philosophic needs require a certain doubleness in our idea of God; but why a "three-ness?" If it is granted that we can and must conceive of God as at once Father and Son, why add the Holy Spirit? Some attempt to find an answer was made in the last chapter—but on grounds of history and experience rather than of philosophy. I believe that it is only on such grounds that an answer can usefully be sought. Dr. H. R. Mackintosh has written:

The argument for a vital duality can never yield a trinity; it gives no help in conceiving the third Person of the Godhead, thus failing at a crucial point. . . . No speculative argument known to the present writer has the slightest value as proving a third Divine distinction which is either "Holy" or "Spirit." And the fact is a strong reminder that the origin of the idea of Spirit, in its Trinitarian meaning, lies not in philosophic thought, but in history and life.¹

That seems to me to be true. Mr. S. A. McDowall has indeed followed the lead of Augustine, and attempted (in his book *Evolution and the Doctrine of the Trinity*) to found a Trinitarian view of God on the nature of human personality. He claims "to find not merely analogy between, but identity in, the nature of human and Divine personality."² The human self is recognized under three aspects, as *will*, *intellect*, and *emotion* (nothing is said about *sensation*), all of which, though with varying emphasis, are present in every act of the mind, just as Augustine argued that all the Divine Persons are present and concerned in the activity

¹ *The Person of Jesus Christ*, p. 519.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 63, note.

of each. Will is identified with Fatherhood or creativeness, Intellect (rather strangely) with Sonship, and Emotion (or love, with its freedom and spontaneity) with the Spirit. The argument is maintained with ability, but it appears to me to be a *tour de force*, and, so far as I am able to understand it, it leaves me unconvinced. The writer pleads for the retention of "Person" as the right translation of *hypostasis*, but he does not seem to recognize that in modern (as contrasted with ancient) psychology a "person" is a being *conscious of self-hood*. It appears to me quite impossible to hold that will and intellect and emotion are conscious *selves*, and if they are not the argument that each human being is a trinity of persons goes to pieces. From the religious side, moreover, the doctrine seems deficient in that the Trinitarian conception ceases to have any vital connection with the Incarnation: the Sonship of Jesus loses its special significance.¹

But ought we to regard the Persons of the Trinity as conscious selves? The answer, surely, must be Yes, if we are to retain the word "Person" and to give it the sense it has in modern thought.² But if we do retain it with this meaning we become at once tritheistic (as much popular thought undoubtedly is), and thereby abandon both orthodoxy and philosophy. That there is consciousness of Self

¹ A more restrained and less paradoxical attempt to establish the Trinitarian idea on Augustinian lines has lately been made by Mr. J. H. Beibitz, M.A., under the title *Rationalism and Orthodoxy of To-day*, with much of which I can cordially agree. "The Father is God as He ever moves towards self-expression. The self-expression of God is the Eternal Son. . . . The Third Person of the Holy Trinity is the Divine love operative both in the eternal self-expression of God, which is the Logos in Himself, and in His temporal self-expression, which is the Logos manifested in the universe." But, again, what about the manifestation of God in Jesus, out of which the whole problem arose?

² A reminder seems to be needed that personality, in the light of modern knowledge, is not regarded as *atomistic*: it is now generally recognized that "persons" are, in some degree at least, mutually permeable (especially in the subconscious region), and that personality can to some extent be shared (see above, pp. 79 ff.).

in God the Father must, I suppose, be held by every Theist; that Jesus Christ when on earth was conscious of being a Self, in distinction from his Father, no one is likely to deny if he believes that such a person really existed and lived a truly human life. But to say that the eternal Logos, or the Holy Spirit, is conscious of a distinct Personality would be to affirm what we cannot know. We may therefore be content, in company with the New Testament writers, to acknowledge experience of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, without attempting to "rationalize" these concepts any further than experience warrants. We may recognize a threefold manifestation of God—in Nature, in History, and in the Christian life—without committing ourselves to a Trinitarian formula.

It is interesting to note a sympathetic approach to the Christian conception of God on the part of the eminent biologist, Professor Julian Huxley, who (rather unnecessarily, as it appears to me) rejects all attribution of Personality to God:

That some form of trinitarianism is a reasonably natural method of symbolizing the inevitable tripleness of inner experience, outward fact, and their inter-relation is obvious enough. In the particular trinitarianism of Christianity, the reality apprehended to exist behind the forces of Nature is called the Father; the upspringing force within the mind of man, especially when it seems to transcend individuality and to overflow into what we designate as the mystical, is called the Holy Spirit; and the activity, personal or vicarious, which mediates between the individual and the rest of the universe, reconciling his incompleteness and his failures with its apparent sternness and inexorableness, is called the Son.¹

This is suggestive, though hardly satisfying to the Christian. It shows that the threefold experience of God which Christianity carries with it does answer, in some

¹ *Essays of a Biologist*, pp. 7 ff. The thought is elaborated on pp. 262 ff.

degree, to the philosophic needs of earnest seekers after truth; and this, I believe, as Christianity becomes better understood, will be more widely discovered and acknowledged than it is at present. That there is such a threefold experience of the Divine seems to be now widely recognized among Christians, whether or not they are regarded as orthodox. Evelyn Underhill, addressing an audience largely composed of Unitarians, recently spoke of it as "appearing perpetually in the vast literature of religion." First, we interpret our relation to God in a non-personal and cosmic way: He (or It) is a principle of Permanence or Rest within and beyond our world of change. Second, "the relationship is felt rather as the intimate and reciprocal communion of a person with a Person; a form of apprehension which is common to the great majority of devout natures"; to which "Christianity, through its concepts of the Divine Fatherhood and the Eternal Christ, has given its fullest and most beautiful expression." Lastly, there is the dynamic experience of the Spirit, as the power that dwells within and energizes us.¹

We may well believe that the Christian interpretation of this threefold awareness of God will remain: that our religion will continue to rest upon experience of God as Father, Source and Sustainer of the world; of God as Son, coming into the time-process as Revealer and Redeemer; and of God as Holy Spirit, living on in redeemed and faithful disciples of Jesus, whether conscious or not of their relation to Him, the same life of filial obedience that inspired and moulded the thoughts and words and deeds of the Son himself. The Holy Spirit is at once the well-spring and energy, the guide and goal, of Christian living, because it is no vague impersonal influence, but the Spirit of Christ: in theological language it "proceeds from the Father through the Son."

¹ Summarized from *The Life of the Spirit and the Life of To-day*, pp. 6-11.

SUMMARY

DOES the presence of Evil in the world render impossible belief in a God who is at once the Author of Nature and a Father of infinite love? The chief questions raised by it are: (1) Why does the world-order appear to be non-moral? (2) Why is there apparently no personal Divine Response to man? (3) Why does the world contain so much undeserved Pain? (4) Why is human life a chaos through moral evil?

Postponing specifically Christian answers, we may say:

(1) That even in the existing world-order goodness and happiness are in the long run linked together. But, since there is order, events cannot happen so as to bring to each individual what he may be thought to deserve. The maintenance of animal life by the destruction of other life is probably inevitable; but as evolution advances co-operation and affection tend to replace the struggle for individual existence.

(2) The apparent "silence" or inaction of God may be attributed partly to men's spiritual indolence and partly to a Divine purpose.

(3) Pain is inevitable, and largely educative. Infra-human nature, in spite of the struggle for existence, is probably in the main happy. In human life Pain is largely the result of wrong-doing, but most of it falls on the relatively innocent. This is because men are organically bound together. But undeserved pain may be turned to moral account.

(4) God must be held responsible for the evolution of beings endowed with free will and therefore liable (or certain) to misuse it; but an imperfect person is of more potential value than a perfect machine. The repentant sinner takes the whole blame on himself.

CHAPTER VIII

THE WORLD-PROBLEM

AN inquiry into the truth of Christianity must face the question whether the Christian's belief in God can be harmonized with his knowledge of the world. This question, in part, has been already looked at. We saw reasons for believing that faith in God as a Personal Will, working out in the world an intelligent Purpose, is not necessarily in conflict with assurance of the reign of Law, of an order, or uniformity, which Science always assumes and continually verifies.¹ But when we further assert, as the Christian must, that that Purpose is wholly *good*, we are confronted with a vast array of facts which demand closer attention than we have yet been able to give them. There is much in the world that is manifestly and undeniably evil—much that a sincere and honest mind cannot by any sophistry evade or explain away. Is it possible to believe in a Creative Purpose which is wholly good, in face of a world that abounds in evil?

To many people in the present day, even to some who feel the need of religion, the answer is so obviously "No" that Christianity is for them impossible. The contradiction is almost a commonplace in modern literature, but one example may suffice. A distinguished journalist, contributing to a discussion on Religion initiated by a great newspaper, wrote:

Christianity, like all other religious teaching, has failed to effect any lasting improvement in human nature because it is based on an idea which cannot be squared with human experience. It is built upon an assumption which a few minutes' reflection by even

¹ See above, ch. iv.

a mediocre intelligence like mine shows to be unwarranted. It teaches that God is love, a statement that is contradicted by everything we know about the world and the creatures in it. The more familiar we become with the facts of life the more impossible we find it to accept the doctrine of a personal Creator filled with affection and kindness towards His children, of a Deity whose attributes are infinite mercy, toleration, and love.

How could such a God have made a world in which necessity compels so large a number of species to feed on other species? How could He have set in motion the pitiless processes of what we call Nature? How was it possible for Him to arrange that tigers should ravage flocks, that hawks should tear and mangle, that stoats should suck the blood of rabbits, cats prey upon mice? And why, when He decided to redeem human beings from the eternal punishment they had merited by faults implanted in their characters by Him, did He wrap the matter up in so much mystery, and then leave by far the greater number of them outside the benefit so conferred?¹

I choose this quotation because it puts down in plain uncompromising terms the problem that confronts the Christian Theist. Its vein of arrogance need not detain us further than to ask how the writer would explain the fact that large numbers of men and women of much more than "mediocre intelligence," who have given not "a few minutes' reflection" but a lifetime of study to Nature and to human life, yet retain their Christian faith? The great issues of life cannot be decided in this summary fashion. Such facts as are alluded to by Mr. Fyfe have been before the world for much more than two thousand years, and faith in God still survives, not only among the unreflecting crowd, but among persons of wide knowledge and acute intelligence, who practise "free thought" as a religious duty. This is one of the facts that need to be borne in mind.² From the nature of the case no accurate estimate can be made of the proportion of thinking people whose faith in God is not destroyed

¹ Hamilton Fyfe, in the *Morning Post*, January 3, 1927.

² See above, pp. 93 ff.

by the evil of the world; but my own impression is strong that it is greater now than it was fifty years ago.

The problem of Evil is no doubt more serious for Christianity than it is for some of the Eastern religions in which Goodness or Love is not the essential quality attributed to God; and it has of course been thrown into stronger relief by the Darwinian theory of the "struggle for existence" as a main factor of biological progress. Christianity is not "optimistic" in the sense that it turns a blind eye to the darker facts of life; nor is it "pessimistic" in allowing them so to overwhelm the mind that no solution of them can be thought possible. It offers a solution: not indeed intellectually complete or satisfying, but leaving wide room for "faith"—a solution which is practical rather than theoretical, by which evil may be "overcome" by living, even when its dark shadow cannot be dispelled by thinking.

Certain attempts to solve the problem too easily Christianity has, though not always with clearness and consistency, rejected. It refuses to regard evil as a feature of phenomenal existence only, and the phenomenal world as pure illusion which can be transcended by meditation and self-discipline. It declines to find the cause of evil in matter, and to attempt to overcome it by the suppression of bodily desires. It rejects the Persian doctrine that Good and Evil are due to two opposite powers in the universe waging eternal war with one another. It will not countenance the Marcionite view that this evil world is not the work of the Christian God, but of a Demiurge whom He is out to overcome. No form of ultimate Dualism is really consistent with the Christian view. And in this it may fairly be said that Christianity is, so far at least, in line with science and philosophy. Human reason drives us by an inner compulsion to strive to break down dualisms, and in the Many to find the One. Science is compelled to seek ever for Unity of force and law behind the complexity of events; and, in

biology especially, it shows us a universe in which the forces that make for good and evil are, as in the struggle for existence, so inextricably intertwined, and even in the last resort identified, that to separate them would be like trying to tear the world asunder. Whatever functions may be attributed to the Devil, the "will to live" can scarcely be one of them. For certain kinds of apparent evil, at any rate, we must hold the Creative Power of the world to be responsible.

ELEMENTS OF THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

The problem is complex, and it will help us to try to break it up and deal with it piecemeal; for some of its aspects (though they cannot be rigidly separated) are less intractable than others. In the rest of this chapter I will try to show how these features appear when we try to look at them quietly and sanely, reserving for the next the special contribution that is made by Christianity to their solution. They would seem to be mainly four.

(1) The world-order seems to be non-moral, favouring strength rather than goodness: there is little evidence of what used to be called "the Moral Government of the universe."

(2) The Power that works behind the events of life does not seem to treat us as persons—as we should suppose it would if it were a Personal and loving Will.

(3) The world is full of Pain, much of which seems to have no moral purpose.

(4) Human life is largely a chaos, through Moral Evil or Sin, for the presence of which the Creative Power must take at least a share of responsibility.

Statements like these, I suppose, summarize the main reasons why for many people belief in the God of Christianity is difficult or impossible. Is there anything that a calm and dispassionate view of the world and its processes can do to mitigate their harshness?

(1) A NON-MORAL UNIVERSE

Belief in "the Moral Government of the world" was understood to imply assurance that goodness brings success and happiness, while wrong-doing brings disaster. This doctrine, as was noted above, was taught abundantly by Hebrew lawgivers and prophets, but was called in question by later thinkers, especially by the authors of the books of Job and Ecclesiastes. What do we mean by Goodness and Badness? In my own judgment, these terms can only be regarded as referring to one of the ultimate values of life, and cannot therefore be defined in terms of anything else, such as pleasure and pain. We may perhaps say that Goodness is a right relation to our whole environment, especially to that part of it which is spiritual: that is, to other sentient beings and to the unseen Power that works behind phenomena. If by Moral Government we mean that in the long run such a relation leads to happiness and its opposite to misery, there would seem to be no question of its reality. Broadly speaking, the universe seems to be so constructed that this is what happens. On biological principles, indeed, a universe without moral government in this sense is hardly conceivable: for how can success in life be achieved by non-adaptation to the real environment?

The assumption here made is, of course, that our real environment is at bottom, and predominantly, of a spiritual nature. This need not be defended now, if we bear in mind the considerations previously advanced.¹ Had it been clearly held by T. H. Huxley, he would not have been compelled to conclude that the universe speaks with divided voice, calling us by its Cosmic Process to self-assertion and the crushing of the weak, and by its Ethical Process in the opposite direction.² He very truly saw that in human life the

¹ See above, pp. 121 ff.

² The Romanes Lecture, in *Evolution and Ethics* (1894), pp. 81 ff. (On this see further, p. 195, note.)

Ethical Process must supersede the Cosmic Process, or it will come to destruction. What he does not seem to have seen is that, when beings are evolved endowed with self-conscious reason, their adaptation to environment is predominantly of a spiritual rather than of a physical character. Collectively, such beings form a large part of each individual's environment: to live successfully he must come into right conscious relations with them; and, if Theism holds, with God also. Moreover, Huxley only had glimpses¹ of the wide basis laid for the Ethical Process in animal and even in vegetable life below the human level. Recent biology has shown that even in infra-human life a far larger place is taken by co-operation, mutual aid, and care for the weak, than Huxley and the earlier Darwinians were prepared to allow. As Evolution advances, mere physical strength becomes less and less a condition of survival, and other factors of a more spiritual quality, like intelligence and affection, increasingly take its place. The great saurians of the Mesozoic age gave place to feebler mammals and birds that were more gifted with intelligence and cared with the deepest affection for their young. In human history this appears to be the dominant factor making for success. It is the races in which loyalty has been strong, and where family life has provided a training in unselfish love, that have tended to rise and to remain. The nations and races that have trusted to brute strength have tended to become enervated by wealth and luxury, and have disappeared:

Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they?

Exclusive attention to the physical aspect of the environment leads many people to the pessimistic conclusion that, as the universe appears to be gradually cooling by the radiation of its heat into empty space, it will in time cease to be a fit abode for life of any kind, and that long before

¹ *Evolution and Ethics*, note 20, pp. 114 ff.

this happens all the higher forms of life will be killed off by cold. Were we sure of this, it would no doubt be difficult to maintain that the universe in its physical aspect backs our morality. But how can we be sure of it? How can we possibly know enough to be certain that we have included in our calculation *all* the factors that will mould the universe throughout the indefinite future? Views of this sort leave me personally unimpressed. If the universe is like a clock running down, it must presumably have been once wound up; and, if once, why not again? And, besides, we have to consider the possibility, which Religion everywhere suggests to us, that conscious life is not terminated by the death of the body: that relations with a spiritual environment may persist even when the physical affects us no more.

It seems, then, unsafe to assert that our ordinary knowledge presents us with a universe that is indifferent to human morality. In the long run goodness and happiness appear to be linked together. But the "run" may be very long; and meanwhile we have the familiar spectacle of the suffering of the righteous. Clearly we cannot assert that the laws of the universe work out justice to each individual, or even to temporary communities, at least in the present life; and we know so little of the future one that it is better, in this argument, to leave it out of account.¹ We have to reckon with a universe in which the Power that works behind phenomena seems to pay little or no regard to individual merit. Calamities like storm and flood and earthquake destroy good and bad alike. This aspect of our experience has been dealt with in part in Chapter IV, and it only remains to suggest that a world of law and order must be worked on general principles, and cannot be adapted to what we may think the merits of each individual. Jesus himself, as we have noted, seems fully to have recognized this. If we assert, as the Christian must, that in the world

¹ See later, pp. 206 ff.

there is being worked out an intelligent and wholly beneficent Purpose, we are not bound to conclude that each of its happenings is deliberately intended or "sent" by God. His whole Purpose covers fields that are far beyond our ken. An infinite Intelligence must work in ways that finite intelligence cannot fully apprehend, just as no dog can understand all its master's doings. If everything happened to-day in a way that would wholly satisfy our sense of justice, that fact would of itself prove its own imperfection; for in ten years' time, if we had grown wiser, we should see that things might have been better planned. Such arguments are familiar; they are far from establishing a "theodicy"; but they provide a useful warning against the idea that Christianity requires belief in the impossible.

It remains, under this heading, to consider what to Mr. Fyfe and many more is the chief ground for disbelief in the Christian God: the fact that in this world the strong prey upon the weak, and life maintains itself by the destruction of other life. That is obviously how the world is made. As I sit writing, the lawn in front of my window is the haunt of happy blackbirds, seeking "their meat from God" in the shape of worms. Life is so productive, even prodigal, that if the numbers of certain species were not kept down by others they would soon fill the world. A single codfish will produce several million eggs, of which only a minute fraction ever come to maturity. The rest serve as food for other fishes. It is said that a beneficent Creator, if there were one, would have arranged things differently. Are we in a position to say this? The moment we try to conceive an alternative, we are attempting to picture a wholly different kind of world, a task beyond our powers. All animals feed on organic substances produced by other animals or by plants; the only living creatures that manufacture their food out of inorganic substances are plants. How do we know that living creatures feeding as plants feed could ever have

been developed into sensitive, free-moving, intelligent, and finally conscious beings? How do we know that organic food is not a necessity if vital energy is to be liberated for the higher developments of life? If it is rash to assert that life could not have progressed on different lines from those we are acquainted with, it is equally rash to say that it could; in either case we are making a statement about what we do not know. I am not aware that belief in the Christian God necessarily involves the idea that He could have made matter with wholly different properties, and subject to quite other laws, than those of which we have some knowledge. Even if He could, to argue in this way is to "run out into imaginations," and to leave the realm of the knowable. A great deal of nonsense has been talked about Divine omnipotence. May we not conceive that if "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom. viii. 22), the immanent creative Power in a real sense "groans and travails" also?

Long, and dreary, and bitter
Is Thine anguish, O God, in creation.¹

"Nature red in tooth and claw with ravine" is a picturesque phrase called out by the fact that the Life-impulse drives living creatures to find their food in whatever ways they can, and that one of the many ways open to them is to devour other living, and even sentient, organisms. Those races that take to such a method of feeding become more and more adapted to it through natural selection; hence the development of teeth and claws. The suggestion of deliberate cruelty in the phrase quoted from Tennyson is poetry rather than science; it is only some conscious and "intelligent" beings that enjoy inflicting pain. To what extent the carnivorous habit does actually cause pain we shall be considering shortly. I make no claim, of course, that such

¹ For the thought of suffering in God see later, pp. 203 ff.

considerations as have here been advanced solve the problem presented to the Christian by the apparently non-moral quality of the Power that works in Nature; all that I have attempted to do is to reduce it to its true proportions, which still leave abundant room for the *faith* that discerns behind phenomena a Love which to the senses and the intellect is not apparent.

(2) A NON-PERSONAL GOD

The difficulty that in the ordinary events of life we find it hard to discover God as an unseen Friend and Helper has been partly dealt with in the chapter on "Prayer and Providence." Here I need only add that the apparent "silence" or inaction of God, which is undoubtedly a great difficulty to many who earnestly wish to live a Christian life, seems to be due partly to our own spiritual sluggishness, and partly to a Divine purpose that we should be trained to "walk by faith and not by sight." The whole subject has been well treated by Henry Churchill King in his book *The Seeming Unreality of the Spiritual Life*. We are bound to recognize the possibility that the spiritual atmosphere around us may be throbbing with messages from God which are unheard by ears that do not listen, just as our wireless receivers do not catch the vibrations to which they are not attuned. We may also have to learn that we can only rise to the full height of our manhood as our powers of spiritual apprehension are called out by active exercise; and that this may involve a vigorous *search* for God which would be needless if He were demonstrable like a fact in nature, obtrusive like the sunlight, or even palpable like the air we breathe. "No man hath seen God at any time"; but those who seek Him diligently find Him.

(3) THE PROBLEM OF PAIN

The abundant presence of Pain in life has long been a sore problem for the Theist, especially since the certainty has been reached that it accompanied the struggle for existence during countless pre-human generations, and can no longer therefore be regarded as a consequence of human sin. Here again we ought not to exaggerate, but should try to reach a balanced view. Speaking broadly, there can be no doubt that Pain is a necessary and even a beneficent provision of nature. The very same nervous system that is the seat of pleasure when the organism is functioning normally is also the seat of pain when anything goes wrong; and we can hardly conceive that it should not be so. Pain is the great educator, teaching us what to avoid; without its warnings living creatures would soon destroy themselves, like a moth in a candle-flame. Further, though we cannot know with certainty the degree of pain that is felt by creatures less highly developed than ourselves, it is practically certain that its intensity rapidly increases with advance in complexity of nervous organization. It is known that savages suffer far less acutely from wounds and sores and the pains of childbirth than do "civilized" human beings; and in all probability animals that have not reached the stage of self-consciousness suffer still less. At least they are exempt from the severer forms of *mental* torture which afflict humanity. Fear there certainly is; but not the crushing terror of conscious and prolonged anticipation of evil. It is very doubtful how far the victims of the carnivorous habit feel physical pain. Dr. Livingstone, when his arm was mangled by a lion, said that he felt nothing; and, during the excitement of battle, wounds often pass unnoticed. On the whole there can be little doubt that the world of nature, functioning normally, is a happy world.

Such considerations may rightly be held to mitigate the

horror with which many modern minds look out on "a world of pain." They do not, however, bring us much relief from the burden of suffering in human life, a volume of suffering far in excess of what we can think to be either just or beneficent. The contrast between the peace and joy of outward nature and the inward sorrow and desolation of humanity has inspired many a poet.

Through primrose tufts in that sweet bower
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played;
Their thoughts I cannot measure—
But the least motion which they made
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

From heaven if this belief be sent,
If such be nature's holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament
What man has made of man?¹

The pain of humanity is very largely the result of man's wrong-doing, which will be considered in the next section. In so far as it falls upon the wrong-doer himself, it may be regarded as educative; though even here we have the difficulty that mere mistakes may cause more suffering than deliberate sins. But the chief difficulty is, of course, that by far the larger part of the pain that results from sin falls upon other people than the offender himself. A very few persons may engineer a war—in what they may think to be the interests of their own country, or of certain human groups, or even to avenge an insult—and millions of relatively innocent people, in many lands, may be the sufferers. The individuals who are really responsible for some of the direst calamities that afflict mankind may appear to escape retribution. Wrong-doing may enter the chain of causes

¹ Wordsworth, *Lines Written in Early Spring*.

that bring events to birth, so that when disaster comes it may seem to be due, like storm and earthquake, to blind forces working in Nature. And yet there is a difference between calamities that are purely natural, and those into whose causation human sin enters. Events of the latter kind would not have happened unless some person or persons had done wrong, had made some criminal mistake, or taken risks that ought not to have been taken. In the one case the pain that results is wholly due to Nature; in the other it is partly due to human sin or error.

In either case it is clear that humanity is in some sense an organism, in which malfunctioning in one part may bring widespread trouble; and can we rightly complain that our lives are thus bound together and form parts of one whole? In a universe so constructed it is vain to look for "justice" in the sense that the pain endured by each individual shall be proportioned to his own wrong-doing. If, as Christians believe, a Divine purpose is being worked out through the orderly march of events, in which storm and flood, a faulty bridge, or an unseaworthy ship may destroy the righteous with the wicked, the question we have rather to ask is whether undeserved pain may not be turned to good account for promoting the fulfilment of that purpose. For, in the realm of conscious life, it does not fulfil itself; it requires the co-operation of men. The human reaction to pain must be considered, as well as the pain itself, before we can rightly place it. But this question can only be rightly dealt with in the light of Christianity, and we shall return to it in the next chapter.

(4) MORAL EVIL

In Chapter V it was noted that the course of the world is marked by Degeneration as well as progress, particularly when a race of beings partially abandons the

normal struggle for existence and adopts a parasitic mode of life. While this fact may afford a basis for framing a theory of the origin of Sin or moral evil, there is (as we saw) no Sin in the proper sense of the term except among beings that have reached the stage of self-conscious intelligence and the power of choice. Sin only begins when such personal beings, having alternative values before them which they are able to distinguish as higher and lower, either fail to choose the higher or knowingly identify themselves with the lower. It is, therefore, as pain is not, a breach of the Divine order of the world, a partial frustration of the Divine purpose. It cannot be directly laid to the charge of the Creative Power, as can some of the physical evils we have been considering. Direct responsibility belongs to the beings that choose amiss.

Yet, since such beings could not have gone wrong had they not risen to what we call free-will and then misused it, must not the ultimate responsibility for their choice of evil rest with the Power that so endowed them? If God is the Author of a kind of life that *can* set itself against His purpose, must He not have foreseen that, sooner or later, it *would* do so? And, if He knew, is He not in part at least accountable for what has happened? I am bound to say that in my judgment we do not know, for we cannot penetrate omniscience. But, since to many minds the answer seems to be clearly in the affirmative, it is well to ask ourselves whether there could have been any alternative open to a Creative Power whose purpose was to evolve personal beings fitted for conscious communion with Himself. Finite creatures that could not possibly go wrong would seem to be not persons but superior machines like a perfected clock incapable of error. For anything we can know to the contrary, such beings might have been produced along some different line of evolution. But they would not have been what we mean by persons. Personality as we know it means self-consciousness, and with this a sense of values and the power to form a

purpose—the power, that is, voluntarily to fix the attention on certain objects of pursuit as of higher value than others. This, I suppose, is what we mean by free-will; and to me it appears that an imperfect person, endowed with free-will, is of higher potential value than the most perfect of machines. If so, it was (if we may say it) *worth while* for the Creative Power to produce such beings, at the risk, or even with the certainty, that their power would be misused.

To this extent, then, it seems right to say that responsibility for moral evil must be shared between sinful human beings and the Power that has produced them. But, when we look (as we have done above) at Sin in its more personal aspect, as a breach of right relations between Father and child, it is not so that the religious mind regards it. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned" is the cry of the repentant heart; and if it adds "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me," it says this not in palliation but in deep self-condemnation and shame at what it is. It takes the whole blame; its cry is for restoration to Divine fellowship, for a clean heart and a right spirit. And this is what, according to Christianity, God offers us in Christ—shall we say because He views us

With larger, other eyes than ours,
To make allowance for us all?

I have attempted in this chapter to seize and set forth in their true proportions the main features of what we call the Problem of Evil, and to show that, grievous as it is, the presence of this problem does not necessarily close the door on belief in the Christian God. We have been looking at what George Fox called "the ocean of darkness and death"; we have still to consider whether there is to be found in Christ "an ocean of light and love, flowing over the ocean of darkness," in which like him we can discern "the infinite love of God."

SUMMARY

THE solution to the problem of Evil which Christianity offers moves in the domain of life rather than of intellect. In making men Christlike it imparts to them something of Christ's outlook on the world.

Christianity may be regarded as emergent from ordinary human life (while yet a special gift from God), and therefore as indicating the goal towards which the evolutionary process moves.

The new order of relations which it brings transcends, without violating, the laws of the old order.

Jesus met the pain of the world by so changing men that they could extract from it good instead of harm; he made it possible to extract good even out of sin. The Cross of Christ shows how, by love and obedience, a typical evil deed was transformed into a means of blessing to all humanity; and suggests that this has always been the Divine method of overcoming evil.

The question whether God suffers through human sin may be met by the consideration that it is the self-limited aspect of the Divine which is revealed in Christ. From this point of view the God whom we know does suffer, even if the Absolute does not. Suffering for love's sake may be a condition of the highest joy.

In the Kingdom of God Christianity offers a transformation of the present world-order, even when its evil is firmly entrenched in human customs and institutions.

NOTE on "Eternal Life."

CHAPTER IX

THE CHRISTIAN SOLUTION

IT was said in the last chapter that Christianity refuses the solution suggested by certain oriental religions, that Evil is a feature of phenomenal existence only, and that the phenomenal world is one of pure illusion and without reality. So far as moral evil is concerned, Christianity finds its seat not in matter or phenomena, but in the will of man: that is to say, in his essential personality, which is subjective and not objective. It regards man as having gone wrong in the depth of his personal being; and the consequent disorder in his life as a fundamental reality which cannot be removed by thought but needs a radical cure. The solution it offers is therefore not primarily intellectual but spiritual and practical: one that moves in the realm of life rather than in that of ideas. It proposes to make men, if they will have it so, new beings, able to look out upon the universe with different eyes, and to see that much of its manifest evil is capable of being transformed into good. It gives a new world-outlook.

Christianity does not turn a blind eye on the apparent waste and the undeserved pain of which the world is full. But it claims that, in the light of the revelation and redemption brought by Jesus Christ, a deeper level of Reality is opened to our vision. It will not admit that external evil gives us a clue to what lies at the heart of the universe, that a struggle for self-preservation at the cost of other beings represents its inner nature. The real clue to inner Reality it believes to have been given us in Jesus Christ: not so much in his words as in what he was and what he did: in the victory over the selfish world-order which he won by selfless love. As we come to share in his redemption we

begin to look at the universe with his eyes, and to discern, deep below all its seeming waste and discord, a Heart of Love. Without this clue we fail to see below the surface. Physical science presents us with a universe bound by mechanical causation, in which love and even purpose seem buried wholly out of sight. Biology shows us a world where the Life-impulse is continually driving organisms towards ends of its own, which do not seem to us always good; a struggle, however, in which an element of love shows clear signs of breaking through. The study of human life, through history, psychology, and philosophy, brings before us a "Realm of Ends" in which conscious beings may fulfil the purpose of their life by the pursuit of great values, Truth and Beauty and Goodness; and suggests to us that the Power which works in and guides the universe cannot be indifferent to these ends. Along such lines we approach Reality, and gain hints of its true nature; but none of them takes us to its heart, or gives us full assurance that *there* is the Perfection we are, consciously or unconsciously, seeking.

But in Christ we have a revelation, coming to us from beyond ourselves, of the Best, and much more than the best, that without him we could have imagined or desired. He discloses to the receptive and obedient soul that the inmost nature of Reality is of the kind that he himself embodies and expresses, a Heart of self-forgetful love and service to every human being, a Purpose to transform a world-order based on self-seeking and self-preservation into a new order of relations which he calls the Kingdom of God. If we can get below the contemporary forms of expression in which his thoughts have come down to us, we shall gather that this New Order or New Age is to be no mere artificial construction imposed upon the old by some forcible Divine intervention, no second thought of God to destroy a world that has proved a failure, and replace it by another; but the fulfilment of that which from the first has been the Divine

purpose, the real order which the world was meant to exhibit and pursue. It is to grow up in secret like the seed in the earth or leaven in the meal, as the souls of men are won to receive the redemption which Christ brings, and to have their inward eyes opened to behold the God whom he reveals.

Whether all this is believable, and if so how we are to convince ourselves that it is true, in the face of all that seems to disprove it, we shall be considering in the next chapter. Meanwhile we must refer in greater detail to some features of the Christian solution of the World-Problem.

(1) CHRISTIANITY AS EMERGENT

It seems possible to hold, as was suggested at the beginning of this volume, that in Christ and Christianity a new order of relations *emerges* out of ordinary human life, as organic life emerges out of the inorganic (or may be presumed to do so, though such emergence has never been observed), and as conscious personality emerges out of organic life.¹ This conception need not be set aside on the ground that principles closely akin to those of Christianity were reached before in other religions and philosophies, notably in the prophetic religion of the Hebrew race. Self-conscious life itself, though clearly emergent, is prepared for by the naïve perceptual consciousness we suppose to exist in the higher animals. Nor, on the other hand, need it be thought unacceptable on the ground that Christianity claims to be the gift of God to men, rather than an order of relations that arises spontaneously out of humanity itself. For it is certain that, if we have to do with God at all, He is immanent in the

¹ The emergence of a new order of relations, when conscious life supervenes on that which is merely organic, seems to be the truth which T. H. Huxley left as a puzzle when he contrasted the Ethical Process with the Cosmic Process (see above, p. 181, and Julian Huxley, *Essays of a Biologist*, pp. 68 ff. and 260 ff.).

world and its operations, and not transcendent only. We cannot now, in the old Deistic fashion, think of creative activity as proceeding *ab extra*, and of nature and its forces as undivine. If Christ comes out of the heart of nature (in the widest meaning of that term, including the spiritual as well as the physical), he comes out of the heart of God. I see no necessary contradiction in holding (a) that in Christ we have a new revelation of God and from God, and (b) that he is organically connected with the whole life of the universe.

From this point of view the Christ life may be regarded as the goal of the evolutionary process, a manifestation of the immanent Divine Purpose. Such a world-view helps us in many ways. If it should be said that the goal should be sought at the *end* of human history, we have to remember that in the life of conscious beings the motive power that leads to progress is not some semi-blind Life-impulse pushing them (as it were) from behind, but an ideal that shines in front and is consciously sought and pursued. If, further, it is objected that on this view the ideal should have been made known as soon as full conscious life *began*, the answer is that it could not then have been appreciated or accepted. Not until a portion of the human race had been sufficiently developed on the spiritual side to receive it, could the ideal have been so presented to them as to shape their lives. The revelation, therefore, to be effective, must arise in the course of human history. And this may explain also why it was made in the first instance to the few and not to humanity at large. "Our Lord hath sprung out of Judah";¹ he came from and to a group of people whose moral and spiritual capacities were in advance of the rest of humanity, where alone (so far as we can judge) such a human life could have arisen, or, if it did arise, could have been appreciated as a revelation from God. It seems to have been

¹ Heb. vii. 14.

the Divine method in human evolution that higher truth should be discovered by, or made known to, the few, and by them shared with the many; that man's co-operation should be required for the education of mankind in the life of the spirit.

(2) THE OLD ORDER AND THE NEW

The new order of relations revealed by Christ—relations between man and God and also between man and his fellows—was destined to transform the existing order of the world, but without violating its laws. Speaking broadly, Jesus seems to have accepted the natural order as expressing the mind of his Father: the sunshine and the rain, the growing corn, the feeding of the birds. He was sent to combat not that, but the evil in men's lives. His "mighty works," the accounts of which must rest on at least a basis of fact, seem to have been "signs," to himself and others, not that the old order was in itself evil or undivine, but that a New Order was breaking through it. They were mainly directed to healing men and women from diseases of body and mind—disorders which, especially in their mental forms, he seems to have regarded, not as the work of his Father, but as part of the evil of the world which it was his function to cure.¹

In this respect our Lord's attitude to Nature appears to have been closely akin to that whereby human intelligence works mighty transformations. Man conquers Nature not by defying it but by obeying it—by patient discovery of its working, and the utilization of its forces in accordance with its laws. His discoveries, so far, have been mainly in the physical and biological realms: how to use, for his own ends, the forces latent in coal and rock-oil, in the electrical constitution of matter, and the like; how to overcome disease

¹ Note especially Luke *xiii.* 16: "[a woman] whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years."

by countering the action of bacteria and other minute organisms. But he may be on the verge of further discoveries, in which the realm of the spiritual will be brought to bear on the physical—as in bodily healing through the use of suggestion, and so forth. The works of Jesus were, in all probability, similarly based on insight into Nature's powers;¹ he sought to transform the world not by violating its laws but by acting in accordance with them.

(3) THE TRANSFORMATION OF EVIL

The evil in human life, both pain and sin, was what he was out to overcome. He met it, not by passive acceptance of it as the will of God, but by transforming it into good. Calamities, and the bodily and mental pain they cause, he refused to regard as "sent" by his Father to punish men for sin.² His attitude here is strikingly different from that of most of the prophets, and seems to have surprised his hearers. In the Johannine story he is represented as saying that the congenital blindness of a certain young man was not "sent" because of his own sins or those of his parents, "but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." In interpreting this passage we should bear in mind the Jewish habit of speaking of consequences in terms of design. We must not tie him, or the evangelist, to the literal meaning—that the man's blindness was directly ordered by God so that a miracle might be performed on him. What he rather means is that, given human obedience and willing co-operation, the evil circumstance may be utilized for good, for the greater glory of God.

It is in this way that Christianity sets out to overcome the

¹ Note his manifest use of suggestion in anointing with saliva the eyes of the blind; and (probably) in allowing the Gerasene madman to be convinced by the spectacle of the swine that his inward tormentors had left him (Mark v. 1-20).

² Luke xiii. 1-5, John ix. 1-3. (See above, pp. 94 ff.)

external evil of the world: by so changing the sufferers that they extract from it good instead of harm. This is the Christian answer to the problem of undeserved pain in human life—that, if rightly taken, it can be made the means of a blessing which could not be experienced without it. The Christian is like Wordsworth's Happy Warrior:

Who, doomed to walk in company with pain,
Turns his necessity to glorious gain.

Paul, harassed with a "thorn in the flesh" which could not be removed through prayer, was enabled to "glory in his weaknesses, that the strength of Christ might rest upon him."¹ While pain may harden and embitter the rebellious spirit that asks "Why should I be treated thus?" its effect on the soul that is bent on following Christ may be precisely the reverse. There is nothing that brings a man or woman into the place of tenderness and sympathy with others like pain and sorrow bravely borne. We all know that when we need help and consolation it is to those who themselves have suffered that we naturally turn. And, strange as it may seem, it is often those who suffer most who learn most of the love of God, are permitted to enter most abundantly into His inner joy, and find themselves enabled to impart it to others.

It is they who share Thy sorrow that can share Thy love Divine,
They who tread with Thee the winepress that can offer heavenly wine.

As someone has finely said: "When we are sent about God's business, to lay healing hands on the wounds of the world, we shall find ourselves better equipped for this holy service by every pain of the body, every mood of heartbreak and despondency, that we have passed through in our mortal day."²

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 7-10.

² *Thoughts of a Tertiary.*

As it was with our great Leader, the way to more abundant life may be the way of Gethsemane and the Cross. In this sense the Christian is able to say with Paul that "*to them that love God* all things work together for good"¹—while to those who do not there can be no such assurance.

Christ has taught us the Divine alchemy whereby base metal may be transmuted into gold. But the paradox is that evil can only be so transmuted if it is treated *as* evil and therefore as something to be overcome, not if it is accepted in a spirit of fatalistic resignation, or sophistically explained away as camouflaged good. This is particularly to be noted when the pain that troubles us is that of others rather than of ourselves. If we attempt to console ourselves with the idea that it is "good in disguise," or a part of the Divine Purpose for the education of mankind, we shall be less eager than Jesus was for its removal, and for doing our own share in helping to transform the world.

The question is often asked whether not only pain but *sin* can be transmuted from evil into good. There is a vital difference. Pain, as we have seen, is inevitable in highly organized beings, is a salutary check on malfunctioning, and must be regarded, broadly, as in accord with the laws of the universe. It appears to be part of the Divine Purpose that wrong-doing should, sooner or later, be attended with suffering. But sin itself can only be rightly regarded as wholly outside the Purpose of God—as entirely contrary to His will. It is something that ought not to be there at all; and consequently its evil effects, while they ensue in accordance with the laws of the universe, are also in a real sense contrary to the Divine intention. They are results of causes which ought not to have existed. They are often worse than pain: they include the loss of inward freedom, the hardening of the heart, the blinding of the spiritual eyes to goodness and

¹ Rom. viii. 28.

to God. The Gospels are full of warnings against trifling with sin.

For ever round the mercy-seat
The guiding lights of love may burn;
But what if, habit-bound, thy feet
Shall lack the will to turn?

What if thine eye refuse to see,
Thine ear of heaven's free welcome fail,
And thou a willing captive be,
Thyself thy own dark jail?¹

This may well be so; but the Gospel is that even human sin is not beyond the Divine resources; that Christ's redemption can sound its very depths; and that, while many of its consequences remain, the sinner himself can be so changed that some of them at least can be turned into means of blessing to himself and others. Whether there is much or little in the proverb "the greater the sinner the greater the saint," it certainly seems to be true that even experience of "the depths of Satan" can be turned, after true repentance and restoration, to moral account. The man who knows that he has deeply sinned may become more humble, more thoroughly weaned from self-complacency, more loving and tender and sympathetic to the erring than he who has either never been tempted as they have, or, if tempted, has usually been able to resist.

The crowning instance of the turning of moral evil into good is of a different order. In the Cross we see Redemption wrought by One who was "tempted in all points like as we are, *yet without sin.*" We see a character of perfect insight, obedience, and love brought face to face with human blindness and selfishness and hate, and winning its victory, not by any use of supernatural force, but by its own inherent qualities. The murder of Jesus was a repulsive judicial

¹ Whittier, *The Answer*.

crime; and we must not belittle its horror under the idea that its perpetrators were not free agents because they were working out a Divine decree.¹ Nor, on the other hand, should we magnify it unduly, as though similar crimes had not been committed many times in human history, from the condemnation of Socrates downwards, when established ideas and institutions and interests of many kinds have found themselves faced with teaching that threatened to undermine them and bring them to ruin. The Sadducees must have known that Jesus was innocent, yet because of his attack on their authority in the temple courts—an attack which endangered their whole status, political, ecclesiastical, and financial—they determined to get rid of him. They were quite clearly sinning against the light; yet their action was typical of the reaction of the established world-order to new and “dangerous” ideas; and the conflict between them and Jesus gathers into a focus an age-long struggle, in which we see

Truth for ever on the scaffold, wrong for ever on the throne.

But in this particular tragedy the victim was more than a human martyr. Almost from the first the followers of Jesus were able to see in his death the fulfilment of the prophetic vision of the Suffering Servant, whose life “was made an offering for sin.” Their naïve perception of the spiritual worth of his voluntary sacrifice, in days before the Christian mind had vexed itself with theories of Atonement, is expressed by Clement of Rome near the end of the first century: “Let us fix our eyes on the blood of Christ, and understand how precious it is unto his Father, because being shed for our salvation it won for the whole world the grace of repentance.”² I need not here repeat what was written in a previous chapter on the moral efficacy of the

¹ See Vol. I., *Christianity as Life*, pp. 56–60.

² Letter to the Corinthians, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 60.

Cross of Christ for the redemption of the world from sin.¹ It is potent for transforming evil into good because like nothing else in human history it brings men to repentance. It exhibits, not in words but in a deed of perfect love and self-consecration, enacted at a particular time and place, what has from all eternity been the Divine reaction against human sin. In the Cross we see what sin costs the eternal heart of love. The Sufferer was not human only but Divine, and his way of overcoming evil is God's eternal way. If once we can "fix our eyes upon it" and see it in its true colours, it brings us down from all self-righteous complacency, and from all vain efforts to achieve a righteousness of our own, into a place of utter humiliation and self-emptying, where we know that we have nothing to offer but ourselves in adoring gratitude. It breaks down all the barriers we have erected in imagination between ourselves and God, by showing that on His side there is no barrier at all. It abolishes all human enmities, in so far as it brings us into personal experience of "the love which God hath in us." "We love, because He first loved us."²

(4) DOES GOD SUFFER?

But can we suppose that man's sin really causes suffering to God? The traditional view of the Church has been that it does not, because God, who is eternal and sees the end from the beginning, can only experience eternal joy. There has been in recent times a strong reaction against the dogma of Divine "impassibility," and in my own judgment the reaction brings us back somewhat nearer to New Testament thought. We are invited by many modern writers to think of sin as wounding the very heart of God, and most of these writers cannot, I think, be reasonably charged with the ancient

¹ See above, pp. 128-131.

² 1 John iv. 16, 19; cf. Eph. ii. 14-16.

heresy of Sabellianism or "Patripassianism." They do not "confuse the Persons" of the Father and the Son. But they see what is, I hope, becoming clear to many—that loving forgiveness, extended to those who have done wrong, cannot be real unless the heart that loves and forgives feels the inward hurt. To say that this holds for finite persons like ourselves, but not for God, seems to be an abandonment of the belief that we are "made in His image," that our personality is a copy, however imperfect, of His own. The late Baron von Hügel, in one of his later essays, pleads powerfully for the older view, but in my judgment unconvincingly.¹ He fully recognizes suffering in Christ, and sympathy in God; but he seems to divide the human from the Divine by too deep a gulf, and to empty sympathy of much of its reality. What else is true sympathy but *suffering with* another? Is it possible to think of the Father's heart as full of joy when the Son cried from the Cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Is not the clue to the difficulty to be sought in the distinction we have noted above (which Christianity is obliged to make, and which underlies its doctrine of the Trinity) between the thoughts of God as Revealing and Revealed, as Eternal and yet entering the Time-series?² If there are two sides to our conception of God (the third does not now concern us), is it quite impossible to think of God as suffering on the side that is presented to us—the self-limited side on which He enters into personal relations with us and shares our struggle—while on the further side, which is removed from our comprehension, the joy of victory achieved is already His? We might perhaps say that God as Personal suffers, while God as Absolute does not. However this may be—and the region is one where human thought can be no

¹ Address on "Suffering and God," in *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion*, Second Series, pp. 165-213.

² See above, pp. 169 ff.

more than tentative—I believe that some of our religious poets have seen deeper into reality than did the saintly and philosophic von Hügel. They have taught us that suffering and blessedness are not necessarily opposites; that pain and sorrow, borne for a cause that is worthy, may be dissolved in abundant joy; that the strain of strife may issue in triumphant gladness. If this is so with us, may it not be so in God? It was written, of one who could see in the pains of life “the ripples parted from the gold-beaked stem wherewith God’s galley ever onward strains,”

To him the sorrows are the tension-thrills
Of that serene endeavour
Which yields to God for ever and for ever
The joy that is more ancient than the hills.¹

The pains of creation, it may be, were worth bearing—especially those of evolving free personalities, fitted for communion with God.

(5) THE TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIETY

A word is needed, in conclusion, concerning the wider aspect of Christ’s Redemption, as offering victory not only over individual pain and sin, but over evil on the large scale, as embodied in the customs and institutions of society. “Be of good cheer,” said the Johannine Jesus, “I have overcome the world.” By “the world” he means human life with an order of its own not derived from God, set up apart from God, and often antagonistic to Him. It is an order based upon self-preservation and the imagined good of sections and classes of humanity, destitute of the unifying, creative and upbuilding power of a great principle and a great love. It seeks ever to retain what it has got, and fears change as threatening loss. It is the order of self-interest, personal and

¹ T. E. Brown, of Clifton (see above, p. 185).

sectional, as against the real interest of the whole body of humanity. It is like a tree whose root-fibres ramify so widely and deeply through the soil of human life that to uproot it seems impossible. It has moulded the institutions and the lives of men in its own way, so that to suggest a change seems like asking us to alter human nature itself.

Yet the Kingdom of God, as Jesus envisaged it, undoubtedly involved a radical transformation of existing society and its institutions. He never attempted to expound in detail how it would affect the established order of Jewish legalistic religion, or Roman imperialism, or the institution of Slavery on which Greek and Roman life was built. His main efforts, during his brief earthly ministry, were directed to bringing individuals out of the life of sin into that of happy communion with God; and he left much of the application of his principles to be discovered by his followers, when his bodily presence should be replaced by the influence of his unseen Spirit. "I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now." I attempted in the earlier volume to indicate some of the ways in which his principle of universal love, and his vision of the inherent worth of every human soul, did begin to transform the world-order into the Kingdom of God. How the transformation is to be carried forward in our present society, how we are to verify the truth of Christianity by proving that it "works," we shall briefly consider in a final chapter.

NOTE ON "ETERNAL LIFE"

Our treatment of the Christian answer to the questions raised by the presence of pain and sin in human life would obviously be incomplete if no mention were made of the life beyond the grave. Almost all religions have taught in some form that a man is not extinguished by the death of his body; but in the Greek and Roman world this belief had grown feeble, and there was a deep longing (as we see from the Mystery cults) for an assurance of

immortality. How far the Jews of the Diaspora were able to convey to inquirers any such assurance I do not know. But Christianity did, and based it, in a way that non-Christian Jews could not do, on an actual event—the resurrection of Jesus. Undoubtedly by this assurance it did much to lessen the fear of death and to assuage the pain of bereavement, as may be plainly inferred from Christian inscriptions in the catacombs and elsewhere, when these are compared with pagan lamentations. But the Christian belief in “eternal life” was something very different from the half-belief in “the immortality of the soul,” which Plato and others reached on philosophic grounds that to-day are quite unsatisfying. It has been said, and I think with some justification, that of “the immortality of the soul”—that is, of a natural immortality which is the endowment of every man—the New Testament knows nothing. Jesus accepted the Pharisaic belief in “resurrection”—comparatively new among the Jews and rejected by the Sadducees—which the Pharisees based in part on Dan. xii. 2: “Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” It is generally assumed, from the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matt. xxv. and other passages, that Jesus taught a resurrection of all men—of the righteous to bliss and of the wicked to misery. It is, however, noteworthy that, in Luke’s version of his great answer to the challenge of the Sadducees, he is made to say: “*They that are accounted worthy* to attain to that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage.”¹ This would make the future life a gift for the “saved” alone; and, if this were Jesus’s meaning, we should have to interpret the “eternal punishment” of Matt. xxv. 46 as simple destruction of personality. The thoughts of Paul and other early Christians may have run on these lines: eternal life a gift from God to those alone who receive Christ by faith; for the rest destruction. But primitive Christian thought on this subject was so deeply mixed with mistaken ideas of the speedy coming of the Messiah to judgment that it is difficult to disentangle it, or to determine exactly what was supposed to be involved in the “destruction” of the wicked.

The idea seems to be growing that the New Testament teaches what is called “conditional immortality”—a future life for those

¹ Luke xx. 35. For parallels see Mark xii. 18–27, Matt. xxii. 23–33. In all these accounts it is not ordinary people, but saints and patriarchs like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who are spoken of as “the living.”

who are united to Christ by faith, but not for others. Such a doctrine, if held in this bald form, involves the²old division of mankind into two rigidly separated classes, saved and unsaved: in this case one class is immortal while the other is as mortal as "the beasts that perish." To many Christians this is impossible of belief, because our experience of men suggests to us an indefinite gradation, and an inextricable mixture of good and evil in their characters. And so the whole message of Christianity about the future life seems clouded with uncertainty and doubt. This is why I have made so little use of it in the text.

May not the solution be that the phrase "eternal life" represents an *emergent* quality of human existence, related to the ordinary life of people, whether in this world or the next, somewhat as conscious and personal life is related to that of organisms generally? If Christ may rightly be regarded as "emergent," may not this be the truth about the life he brings to men?—a life which begins here on earth but is not to be cut short by death. In this case we should have to rest our belief in *general* immortality on other than specifically Christian grounds; we must not try to base it on the resurrection of Jesus. We should have to appeal to ethical and philosophical considerations, to the testimony of religion generally, and to such a remnant of spiritualistic "facts" as may be verified by Psychical Research. The life of the next world, if rendered probable by such arguments, might well seem (and be) very different from the eternal life which Christianity offers, just as the life of the true saint is very different from that of the common crowd. Eternal life, here and hereafter, is a life of conscious and personal communion with God through Christ, flowing out in love and service. And we may well hope that, for those who in this world fail to "mount, and that hardly, to eternal life," opportunities for doing so will still be open beyond the veil of death.

SUMMARY

THOUGH the truth of Christianity cannot be proved by intellectual processes, it can be verified in experience by living the life of Christian discipleship. By following Christ we come to share his insight. This is a life of adventurous faith and apparent self-sacrifice; but being grounded (as his was) on the inmost nature of Reality it succeeds.

Christian living involves belief that the principle of love taught and lived by Jesus will work successfully in all departments of life, national and economic as well as personal and spiritual; and willingness to take the risk of applying it. Christianity began, and must continue, as a great venture of faith.

The public worship of God by Christian people should be the chief agency for developing and maintaining in them this corporate faith, and for preparing them to be God's agents for establishing in this world the Kingdom of God.

CHAPTER X

THE PATH TO VERIFICATION

JESUS CHRIST has revealed the nature and character of our heavenly Father, the Creator of this world in which we live; has revealed that nature and character to be such as we could not, in the absence of that revelation, have assumed it to be; but, now that we have that revelation, we can progressively verify its truth for ourselves by living as if we knew it to be true, and finding that all along the line our experience is what it would be if the revelation were true.¹

In this passage the Dean of St. Paul's has given in simple words an excellent account of the way in which we may become convinced of the truth of Christianity; and at the same time a description of the essential nature of Christian faith. The Christian religion is an experience of the Divine, and a way of life—both of which involve certain assumptions, or intuitions, as to the nature of the universe, material and spiritual. The truth of these intuitions cannot (in my judgment at least) be demonstrated by any logical or intellectual process in abstraction from the experience and the life of which they form the basis; but they are verifiable and constantly verified in experience as the way of life is accepted and followed. It is the pure in heart who "see"; in Johannine language, "he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life"; "if any man willeth to do the will of God, he shall know concerning the teaching."²

The Pragmatists seem to be right in telling us that we can justify our religious faith by proving that it "works"—provided we avoid the implication that Truth has no existence until it is worked out in life. Rather, the reason why Christianity "works" is that it brings us near to the existing

¹ W. R. Inge, *Speculum Animæ*, p. 26.

² John viii. 12, vii. 17.

heart of Reality. We do not manufacture Truth by living rightly; we live rightly by getting hold of Truth. Truth is *there*, waiting to be discovered; but its deepest layers will not be discovered by processes of observation and thought apart from self-dedication to the best we know. Standing on a bridge at Geneva, and looking down into the blue water of the Rhone, we can almost see every pebble at the bottom, though fifteen or twenty feet below the surface. If our vision of the deepest realities is to be clear, there must be no mud to hide them. It was because the soul of Jesus was clear of sin, because no cloud concealed from him the Divine realities, that he was able to speak with such serene authority. In the Johannine story he tells Nicodemus that he speaks of what he knows, because he, the Son of Man, though here on earth, *is in heaven*¹—that is, lives in unclouded communion with God. And this clearness of vision he sought to impart to others, that they might be able to see as he saw.

The life by which we may verify for ourselves the truth of Christianity is therefore a life of faith. It involves letting ourselves go, in dependence on That which we have not yet proved to be real—as each young swallow, when it comes out of the nest, is compelled to trust itself to the unseen air. No half-measures are of any use; a swallow that clung with one foot to the edge of the nest would never learn to fly. We prove the truth of the unseen Reality by acting as if it were true; and the venture is rewarded, for “underneath are the everlasting arms.” The Christian life is the highest example of “living dangerously”; it means taking enormous risks. Christianity is an adventure, or it is nothing. In this, again, the life of the Master is repeated in his followers. It was the greatest of all adventures. He risked everything that

¹ John iii. 13. The words “which is in heaven” are absent in some MSS., but (being difficult) they are more likely to have been omitted from these than inserted into others. Compare John xiv. 3, “where *I am*,” not “where *I shall be*.”

man could hold dear—not physical comfort and existence only, but even the success of his mission, in perfect devotion to what he inwardly knew to be the will of God. “Remove this cup from me; howbeit not what I will, but what Thou wilt.” His trust and fidelity were rewarded; he was raised from the dead. The hidden nature of things supported his venture, as it supports the venture of the fledgling swallow. Did he *know* it would be so? Not, we may be sure, as certainly as he knew he would have to die; and even in regard to that (so his prayer in Gethsemane clearly shows) he was not absolutely certain. We empty the Cross of its reality, and make the situation unintelligible, if we take for granted that his assurance of resurrection was as definite as the Gospels represent it.¹ He must have faced the question whether his life’s work would not be all in vain;² and he was only enabled to endure the Cross by faith in God—such faith as we also, in our measure, are called to exercise.

“Where I am,” says the Johannine Jesus, “there shall also my servant be”: this is in immediate connection with the “trouble” of his soul at the thought of impending death. “He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.”³ Dying in order to live: this Matthew Arnold called “the secret of Jesus.” The watchword of the old world-order was self-preservation; that of the New is self-loss in love to God and man. What Jesus proved is that the universe backs it—that the nature of things is such that by self-loss (for love’s sake) the true self is made. This is only another side of the life of Adventure. For the sake of Another, the self with all it clings to is thrown

¹ Mark viii. 31, ix. 31, x. 34. See Vol. I., *Christianity as Life*, pp. 64 ff. The evangelists’ reports of the words of Jesus are here almost certainly coloured by their knowledge of the event after it had happened.

² There seem to be traces of this haunting fear in Luke xviii. 8 and xxii. 37, “that which concerneth me *is come to an end*”—the same words (τέλος ἔχει) as are used of Satan’s rule in Mark iii. 26.

³ John xii. 24–36.

to the hazard—in the faith, not the knowledge, that out of its death will come a higher life.¹

To the natural man all this seems folly; and the natural man has crept back into what calls itself the Christian life. Much of what passes for religion is merely putting "safety first." Christianity becomes an insurance policy against disaster in the next world; it is valued for the advantages it yields for this world and the next. In our "Christian" countries it becomes a badge of respectability and a business asset. The citadel of its truth is hedged round with a wire entanglement of creeds and religious forms, and we think that with such defences it is safe from attack. The spirit of glad adventure, in which the first followers of Jesus faced a hostile world, armed only with the weapons of love and joy, is almost wholly lost. And this is the chief reason why our vision of the hidden realities is so dim, our hold on them so insecure. We do not associate with our religion the heroic spirit that in 1914 lifted up our young men in tens of thousands to risk everything for what they believed to be the cause of their country and of righteousness on earth. We leave the life of adventure to be associated with sordid motives on the racecourse, the gaming table, and the Stock Exchange.² Until we recover for our religion the willingness to incur vast risks for its sake, but without the low self-interest that makes gambling a curse; until the profession of Christianity visibly *costs* us something in comfort, money, or reputation; until it is evident that we are willing for its sake to put these things to the hazard, our hold on the truth of Christianity is likely to remain feeble. The life of the spirit will not be vigorous unless we are willing to die to the things of the flesh.

¹ For what follows compare Canon Streeter's essays in the recent book *Adventure: The Faith of Science and the Science of Faith*.

² See Dr. L. P. Jacks, *The Lost Radiance of the Christian Religion, and Legends of Smokeover*.

CHRISTIANITY IN NATIONAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE

But, if we are to verify for ourselves the truth of our Lord's intuitions, something more is needed than our quickening as individuals. There are still Christians who, while accepting Jesus as Lord of their personal lives, suppose that his principles were never intended to regulate the corporate life of humanity, or the customs and institutions which we falsely call "secular." "Business is business": the world of economic relations is thought to be built on wholly different principles from those expressed in the life of love. An anglican bishop once declared, with entire conviction, that if the attempt were made to carry on the British Empire on the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, it could not last a week. People who suggest applying the principles of Jesus to business and national life are thought to be unpractical dreamers, as contrasted with the "realists" or practical men who see things as they are and act accordingly. But are the latter really practical? Do they actually see things as they *are* at bottom, or only as on the surface they appear to be? In international matters they demand material security through guarantees provided by armaments and alliances, as a necessary condition of preserving peace; it seems to them clear that an unarmed nation which, amidst a world in arms, trusted to the spiritual defences of justice and goodwill, would soon be lost. Slowly, however, it begins to dawn upon the minds of Western peoples that material guarantees are no real condition even of security—that they led us into the Great War, and will lead us into another, in which the existence of civilization itself will be at stake. Are not the truly practical people those who can see deep enough into reality to believe that a nation which consistently practised justice to all others need never fear attack?

In the economic field it is widely held that business exists for the sake of profit; the dreamer and idealist is he who

asserts that the only real reason for its existence is the service of the community, that a first charge on its revenues should be a decent subsistence for those who do its work, and that if a business cannot fulfil these conditions it would be better out of the way. It is by no means clear that this is an impracticable ideal, or that those who insist on such ideals are not the true realists. Witness the present condition of certain industries, in which vested interests have successfully resisted all efforts to obtain organization in the interests of the community, and which at the present time (April 1928) appear to be going from bad to worse.

This may be controversial ground; but it should not be matter for controversy, among Christians at least, that the principles taught by Jesus Christ, and by which he lived and died, are intended to cover the whole of life; and that if they governed all our relations—international, racial, and economic, as well as those we call religious—humanity would be on the way to the Kingdom of God. The attempt to apply them in these fields involves great risks; but unless we are willing to face such risks we cannot be true Christians. It is useless for us to call Jesus “Lord, Lord,” while we do not the things that he says; that, as he himself declared, is to build our house on the sand. What is the use of faith, if it is not to be put into practice? Not until we find in Jesus Christ the Lord of all our life, and trust him with it, can the full Christian experience be ours; only by trusting his insight can we come to share it. In spite of all our orthodoxies, many of us still in our heart of hearts regard him as a dreamer, and are unwilling to believe that he really understood the problems of the world. If we would see with his eyes, our religion must be the great adventure of following where he leads.

This does not mean erecting his reported sayings into a code of rules to be painfully obeyed in a spirit of Pharisaic literalism, nor asking (uselessly) “What would Jesus do?” in circumstances wholly different from any that he could

ever have experienced. What it does mean is trusting, as he did, the principle of love to God and men as the ideal mainspring of all human activity; and refusing to portion off any departments of life as outside its sway. If we find it hard to believe that it can be applied under all circumstances, we may remember his own words, "Have faith in God." The conditions he was facing when this injunction was given are worth attention.¹ On one of his last mornings on earth he was crossing with his disciples the valley between the Mount of Olives and Jerusalem. In front of them rose, dark and stern, "the mountain of the Lord's house," where he had lately defied all the might of the Jewish rulers by driving the money-changers from the temple, an outrage on their authority which he knew they would never forgive. What could he do to protect himself and his little band of followers from their certain vengeance? Nothing; and, if he were taken, what about the others? How could they ever, without him, bring his work to fruition? He says to himself, as much as to them, "Have faith in God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass, he shall have it." "This mountain," where were established in apparently impregnable might all the power and interests of the world-order: Jewish ecclesiasticism backed by Roman imperialism; and against it one unarmed Galilean and a few frightened companions. Yet God could remove it and cast it into the sea; and this through the agency of these same feeble disciples, not by any use of force against their foes, but through prayer and forgiveness (verse 25). Was there ever faith so colossal, so apparently defiant of common-sense? But that faith was justified in the issue. Within forty years the city and its temple were destroyed by the Romans; and before three centuries were over a Christian (in name at

¹ Mark xi. 20-25.

least) sat upon the throne of the Roman Empire. And so, when it seems vain to hope that Christ's principle love can conquer the existing world-order, founded like a solid mountain on the basis of self-interest—which dominates the life of the people with its armies and navies, its ramifying financial interests, its appeal to the natural man—let us remember those quiet words, "Have faith in God." "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."¹

The conquered Galilean is acknowledged as a conqueror, the crucified Christ has become a living power. This fact, of which the witness is not a few disciples but the whole volume of history, implies the triumph of humility, purity and righteousness, the triumph of the human over the brutal qualities of manhood, the triumph of the spiritual over the material, of goodness over sin, of the things above over the things on earth. The Suffering Servant founded an empire greater than that founded by Cæsar, and the forces of the universe are revealed as being on the side not of the big battalions but of the virtues manifest in Christ.

Christ rose from the shame and death of the Cross. He has exalted gentleness, goodness, love, to the right hand of God. Generation after generation his victory becomes more clear. Let us meditate on the victory, and in sure and certain hope fix our minds on a transfigured England, whose aim is not the glory of man's pride but the glory of God's love.²

THE FUNCTION OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

But how is this faith to be acquired, and how is it to be kept alive? Some inspiration is surely needed more powerful than that which as individuals we can normally command. It is here that the public worship of God in the name of Christ should find its chief function. It should be the principal means by which corporate faith should be generated

¹ Zech. iv. 6.

² *Life of Canon S. A. Barnett*, p. 767 (from his last Sermon on "The Resurrection and National Policy").

and maintained—by which we enter into a larger life than our own, and find, in fellowship with one another and with our unseen Lord, a “strength made perfect in weakness.” Public worship should be the main opportunity of so surrendering ourselves, in company with one another, to our living Lord that his Spirit can take possession of us and he himself live on in us. Christ himself should be exalted in our thoughts, and our powers of insight quickened to discern the meaning of his life and death and resurrection—to receive his revelation of the underlying love of God which is humanity’s supreme need. It is there that the faith should be begotten in us that he has the answer to the world’s sore problem, and the courage be imparted to follow wherever he may lead. We should learn, in unity with our fellows, not only to adore him but to tread the way of his Cross. Wide horizons should be opened to us of the power of his spirit of love to reconcile all the conflicting interests of race, of nation, and of class; to break down all the enmities that divide man from man. By public prayer and praise, and through the ministry of the word, we should be brought into the place of united consecration, to go forth as his agents, by word and deed, in the glorious adventure of bringing in his Kingdom among men.

Our task is now, however imperfectly, completed. The purpose of this book has been to illustrate the nature of the world-outlook that underlies the experience of God, and the life of love, that Christianity essentially is. Beginning with a discussion of the relations between doctrine and life, we went on to consider the main aspects of Christian thought: the nature of Christ as the supreme manifestation of the Divine in the human; the element of Personality in God which made such a manifestation possible; the place of human sin and its redemption in an evolutionary view of the world; the reality of the Holy Spirit as Christ’s living

presence in the souls of his redeemed followers, and of the Spirit in a wider sense as the working of the Divine in all humanity; and, lastly, the doctrine of the Trinity which arose out of experience of God as revealed in Christ and by the Spirit. In conclusion we have tried to grapple, so far as feeble powers of mind allow, with the age-long problem of evil in the world, and the Christian solution—which is practical rather than theoretical—offering victory over evil by the adventure and sacrifice of love. Thus Christianity as Truth has been presented as both the basis and the outcome of Christianity as Life; beginning as an intuition it abides as an experience.

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